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ABSTRACT

Noting that the use of multi-rater assessment tools (also called 360-degree feedback) in organizations has increased dramatically in recent years, this booklet provides an introduction to this growing practical literature. In addition to annotations of 56 books and journal articles published between 1990 and 1997, the booklet answers frequently asked questions about 360-degree feedback: how and when 360-degree feedback developed; the benefits of 360-degree feedback; how it should be used; how to integrate into organizational development systems; and the future trends and research needs for 360-degree feedback. Appendixes contain the selection criteria and 52 related sources that did not meet the criteria for inclusion in the annotated bibliography. (RS)

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John W. Fleenor
Jeffrey Michael Prince

USING 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK IN ORGANIZATIONS

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Using 360-degree Feedback in Organizations

An Annotated Bibliography

USING 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK IN ORGANIZATIONS

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

John W. Fleenor
Jeffrey Michael Prince

Center for Creative Leadership
Greensboro, North Carolina

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Introduction

One of the more important ways that employees can develop is to receive ratings of their performance from their co-workers—bosses, peers, subordinates, and others. Known as *360-degree feedback*, this activity is now widely used by human resources professionals and in leadership development programs. As its popularity has increased, however, so has the number of publications written on its use. Anyone looking for information about 360-degree feedback faces a dilemma: where to begin?

Thus, the purpose of this bibliography is to provide an introduction to the available literature on the use of 360-degree feedback in organizations, offering a foundation on which more detailed knowledge of it can be built. The fifty-six works annotated in the first section were selected from books and articles that convey the current state of practice, and they focus on its use in organizations for such purposes as assessment for development and performance appraisal. (Additional unannotated references can be found in Appendix A.)

In selecting these works, we found the following areas mentioned repeatedly: (1) history, (2) benefits, (3) tactics, (4) strategies, and (5) future trends. To complement the information in the annotations, each of these areas is discussed in the second section of this report within the framework of these frequently asked questions: How and when did 360-degree feedback develop? What are its benefits? How should it be used? How can it be integrated into development programs in organizations? What does the future hold for 360-degree feedback?

This bibliography does not attempt to answer these questions definitively for the reader. It does, however, attempt to reflect the available knowledge in these areas. Further, it provides a foundation on which judgments about the use of 360-degree feedback in organizations can be based.

The literature was located in part by searching two relevant databases—*Psych-Lit* (January 1987 to June 1994) and *ABI-Inform* (January 1987 to June 1994)—with additional sources up to 1997 also included. Only current (published since 1990), relevant sources were used. Other information was gathered from various contacts in the field and from on-line research. (Complete details on the criteria used to select the literature is located in Appendix B.)

Annotated Bibliography

This section contains annotations of fifty-six works. They were obtained from a search of the literature by using key terms such as *feedback, assessment, appraisal, evaluation, multi-rater, multisource,* and *360 degree.* Annotations are listed alphabetically by the last name of the first author. (The indexes at the end of this report provide complete listings of authors and titles.)

David Antonioni. Designing an effective 360-degree appraisal feedback process. *Organizational Dynamics,* April 1996, pp. 24-38.

Antonioni discusses twelve factors important to the design of a successful (that is, effective) 360-degree-feedback process: (1) Raters prefer the use of 360-degree feedback for developmental purposes as opposed to using feedback for compensation purposes. Such use of 360-degree feedback could produce negative reactions from participants. (2) Written and descriptive 360-degree feedback may be more helpful than rating-scale information. (3) Managers prefer accountability for ratings by the rater. Raters, however, prefer their ratings to be anonymous. (4) Direct report raters (subordinates) who were held accountable for upward feedback (their names were associated with the feedback) gave their managers higher ratings. Anonymous raters gave lower ratings. (5) Managers indicated the following about the nature of the feedback they received: 25% was expected positive feedback, 30% was unexpected positive feedback, 20 to 30% was expected negative feedback, and 15 to 20% was unexpected negative feedback. (6) Raters estimated that 19% of managers would be surprised by low ratings in the feedback. (7) Only half of the raters reported that managers had shared summary results of the upward appraisals. (8) Managers who score high on achievement motivation (that is, want to succeed) and who value feedback are more likely to discuss results with their raters. (9) Managers are not likely to develop specific goals or action plans based on 360-degree feedback. (10) Improvement of low performance ratings is left to the ratee. (11) Seventy-two percent of ratees reported that supervisors did not follow up on action plans related to 360-degree feedback. (12) Eighty-seven percent of ratees felt raters had not recognized their improvement efforts.

Leanne E. Atwater and Francis J. Yammarino. Self-other rating agreement: A review and model. *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* 15, 1997, pp. 141-164.

According to the authors, self-other rating agreement is the degree to which self-perceptions are congruent with the perceptions of others. These perceptions are usually captured with 360-degree-feedback instruments. Atwater and Yammarino present a model of self-other rating agreement based on a review and integration of the existing literature in this area. The authors offer forty propositions that link demographic (for example, gender and age) and personality characteristics, cognitive processes, job experience, and contextual factors to differences between self- and others' ratings. They also propose a scheme for categorizing self-raters based on the amount of agreement with others' ratings. Twenty-four propositions related to relationships between self-other rating agreement and individual and organizational outcomes are presented. For example, in general, very positive individual and organizational outcomes are expected for individuals whose self-ratings are in agreement with others that their performance is good.

H. John Bernardin, Sue A. Dahmus, and Gregory Redmon. Attitudes of first-line supervisors toward subordinate appraisals. *Human Resource Management* 32:2&3, Summer/Fall 1993, pp. 315-324.

This article describes a study of three groups of supervisors in a large federal agency on the subordinate feedback aspects of performance appraisal. The participants were first-line supervisors in an organization that was interested in finding alternatives to traditional, top-down appraisals. Questionnaires were completed that would provide feedback to supervisors and evaluate their attitudes toward appraisal. Group 1 received feedback from both managers and subordinates. Group 2 received feedback only from their managers. Group 3 received feedback from subordinates only.

The focus on attitudes toward upward appraisal, along with previous research, led to four hypotheses: (1) Group 1 will find the feedback more useful for improving performance than the groups who receive feedback from only one source. (2) Attitudes of Group 1 will be more positive (regarding the appraisal process) than attitudes of those receiving only their manager's feedback. (3) Group 3 will be more concerned about the use and impact of

subordinate feedback than those receiving feedback from both subordinates and managers. (4) Attitudes of those receiving subordinate appraisal will be more positive than supervisors who do not receive subordinate appraisal.

Overall, the results supported the incorporation of subordinate appraisal into the appraisal process. The data also support a more comprehensive, 360-degree approach, but authors assert that cautionary actions should be taken to ensure the positive aspects of this method of assessment. A comprehensive, 360-degree approach provides the opportunity to identify critical behaviors and the opportunity to determine qualified sources of feedback who can provide valid and useful data.

David W. Bracken. Straight talk about multirater feedback. *Training and Development*, September 1994, pp. 44-51.

Bracken discusses factors that contribute to the success or failure of multi-rater feedback systems. Along with the increasing use of multi-rater feedback for development, there is an increased use of feedback for appraisal and decision making for pay and promotion. The author offers a definition of a successful multi-rater process: (1) It is reliable and provides consistent ratings. (2) It is valid because it provides job-related feedback. (3) It is easy to use, understandable, and relevant. (4) It creates positive change on an individual and organizational level. Success or failure in implementing a system can occur at any stage of the process.

Bracken's system for a successful multi-rater process includes: process design and planning, instrument development, instrument design, administration, feedback processing and reporting, and action-planning. He discusses in detail each of these stages and addresses key issues.

Bracken concludes that if multi-rater feedback is to be used for personnel decision making, it is imperative that the data be used consistently and accurately. A possible approach is to use multi-rater feedback to create a developmental action plan and record the plan in the appraisal process. The manager could then be evaluated on progress toward the development plan. Bracken advises careful consideration of relevant questions and issues prior to the implementation of a multi-rater feedback system.

Stéphane Brutus, John Fleenor, and Manuel London. Elements of effective 360-degree feedback. In W. Tornow & M. London (Eds.), *Maximizing the Value of 360-degree Feedback: A Process for Successful Individual and Organizational Development.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, in press.

According to the authors, developmental activities using 360-degree feedback have become one of the most popular methods for developing managers in organizations. More and more organizations are using this process to help improve the effectiveness of their managers. Many Fortune 500 companies are either using 360-degree feedback or are considering its use in the near future.

In this chapter, the contribution of 360-degree feedback to individual development is described. Because the practice of 360-degree feedback is generally ahead of research, there are not a lot of studies that focus specifically on this process. This chapter, therefore, attempts to connect research findings and theoretical arguments from different areas of the behavioral sciences to build a case for the value of 360-degree feedback for individual development.

The authors state that 360-degree feedback possesses the same basic four elements as any control system: (1) a set of standards or goals, (2) an information processor, (3) the collection of information relative to the standards, and (4) the use of this information to meet the standards. They argue that the outcomes of 360-degree feedback are contingent on the quality of the entire system. The feedback process must be based on appropriate performance standards. Feedback, once provided, will enable individuals to develop along these standards. Performance standards not only are essential for individual development, but they represent the link to organizational strategy.

This chapter also highlights the importance of measurement in the 360-degree-feedback process. Each rater possesses a unique and valid perspective from which the performanee of the focal manager can be assessed. When valid performance ratings from multiple perspectives are linked to developmental planning, goal-setting, and organizational support, the 360-degree feedback process can lead to positive outcomes for the focal manager as well as the organization as a whole.

Matthew Budman and Berkeley Rice. The rating game. *Across the Board* 31:2, February 1994, pp. 35-38.

This article describes 360-degree feedback as an increasingly used option for performance appraisal and discusses its use in various organizations. The trend toward using 360-degree feedback (as opposed to exclusively using top-down, supervisory ratings) allows employees to have control over evaluations. For organizations shifting to the use of 360-degree performance appraisals, a key factor is how timing affects employee trust in the process. Although managers may desire a new approach to traditional appraisals, they are often wary and insecure about receiving feedback from peers and subordinates. Although training can allay some fears, trust occurs only with time and organizational support for using 360-degree appraisal. The authors discuss various issues related to this method of appraisal: training, impact, managers' sensitivity to receiving upward feedback, and format of the feedback assessment.

The use of 360-degree feedback in a team setting is examined by using two examples of organizations. First, in a Quaker Oats plant in Topeka, Kansas, it was found that when the feedback-and-appraisal system was not a priority and when it was not reviewed, the ratings lost their impact both for decision making and for development. Second, at W.L. Gore in Newark, Delaware, team members recognized the importance of confidentiality of ratings. Managers from both companies asserted that the appraisal system and the feedback assessment must fit within the organizational culture.

The authors also discuss fairness issues involved with using 360-degree feedback for decision making. Many companies use it for developmental purposes only, because of questions about the fairness of peer and subordinate ratings linked to pay and promotion. Additionally, users of 360-degree feedback discussed the necessity of including customers' perspectives in the feedback assessment.

Whatever the specifics of the assessment, as organizations become less hierarchical in structure, top-down performance appraisal will need to be reconsidered. Patience and planning will allow the use of 360-degree feedback to be a key process in this reform.

Robert Carey. Coming around to 360-degree feedback. *Performance*, March 1995, pp. 56-60.

Carey presents various approaches to the use of 360-degree feedback, as well as generalizations regarding the successful implementation of 360-degree systems. He asserts that 360-degree feedback can create productive relationships between managers and employees. To minimize risks involved with its use, Carey makes these suggestions: (1) All parties should understand what the feedback can really accomplish; it is the beginning of a larger change process. (2) Consider enlisting the help of a third party, such as a management consulting or a human resources development firm. (3) Do not make 360-degree feedback the primary determinant of salary, promotions, or termination. (4) Guarantee that feedback will be anonymous. (5) Leaders of the organization must support the process.

Carey also describes three organizational approaches to 360-degree feedback at AT&T, Trompeter Electronics, and Xerox. Finally, the issue of how feedback is used is addressed. There are two main perspectives: Some believe that 360-degree feedback should only be used for developmental purposes, whereas some feel it can be effectively used for performance appraisal and decision making. Ray Calvin, of Trompeter Electronics, describes his company's use of feedback for development and as part of appraisals. All conclude that implementation of 360-degree-feedback systems requires "ample planning and precaution."

Dennis E. Coates. Multi-source feedback: Seven recommendations. *Career Development International* 1:3, 1996, pp. 32-36.

The author discusses his seven suggestions for preventing 360-feedback assessments from losing impact and effectiveness: (1) Learn the technology before investing in it. (2) Make sure the organization is prepared for the 360-degree process. (3) Use well-researched and well-constructed survey items. (4) Protect the confidentiality of raters. (5) Use skilled facilitators to implement the process. (6) Follow up with developmental activities. (7) Separate developmental feedback from personnel and compensation decisions.

Coates bases these suggestions on seven years of research and development of 360-degree-feedback instruments. Each suggestion is followed by information that will allow users to resolve issues, evaluate options, prepare well, and increase the probability of success. The author asserts that experi-

ence has shown that 360-degree feedback can be a powerful tool, but it must be used wisely. He predicts that 360-degree-feedback technology will continue to increase its versatility and accessibility. Careful preparation will allow users to implement a 360-degree system that will meet organizational needs.

Barbara Crystal. The 360° assessment. *Healthcare Executive* 9:6, November/December 1994, pp. 18-21.

This article discusses 360-degree assessments and their impact on healthcare employees and organizations. The growth of 360-degree assessment can be attributed to various marketplace realities (such as downsizing and mergers) and organizational transformations that require a new focus on leadership and effectiveness. In the healthcare field, 360-degree assessments can assist career planning, leadership development, cooperation and communication between individuals and departments, as well as foster preferred leadership styles. It also provides executives with an understanding of the difference between performance and expectations.

Crystal describes current methods of 360-degree assessment and offers four guidelines for choosing an assessment process. (1) The process should have been developed by experts trained in leadership assessment. (2) It should assess leadership effectiveness and not be used for pay or promotion decisions. (3) It should include one-on-one counseling and prepare a personalized action plan for continual leadership development. (4) It should provide comprehensive evaluation of performance. This feedback should include interpersonal skills, communication skills, administrative skills, and other aspects of leadership effectiveness. Essentially, the 360-degree process should elicit confidential data to be interpreted by facilitators, who can then relate the results to the ratee. The process is designed to help executives understand the steps needed to develop leadership effectiveness.
Crystal includes quotes from experts in healthcare and in leadership development fields.

Maxine Dalton. Multi-rater feedback and conditions for change. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 48:1, 1996, pp. 12-16.

This paper discusses the use of multi-rater feedback for developmental purposes versus appraisal purposes. One major distinction between these uses is ownership of information. When multi-rater feedback is used for development, the data are private or owned by the ratee. When used for appraisal, the feedback data are not private. Dalton argues that using multi-rater feedback for appraisal violates basic counseling principles about learning, growth, and change. The first step in eliciting individual change is to set conditions so that individuals will understand that their behavior is not being perceived as they intend it to be. Hearing personal information that is different from one's own perception can be difficult and painful. Using feedback for development ensures that the data are private, providing the recipient with the psychological safety necessary for acceptance. Dalton also asserts that if data are not private (that is, used for appraisal) then the ratings themselves are often affected. Evidence shows that raters tend to be lenient when their ratings will affect a co-worker's employment status.

Dalton identifies two motives for organizations wanting to use multi-rater feedback for appraisal: It opens new markets for vendors, and HR professionals assume that the information on the employee will be "more fair." She also gives three main reasons why this second assumption might not be realistic: (1) The work of Herb Meyer and others at General Electric in 1965 [H. H. Meyer, E. Kay, and J. P. R. French, Jr. Split roles in performance appraisal. *Harvard Business Review* 43:1, 1965, pp. 123-129] showed that public and quantitative appraisals rarely produce change, regardless of who appraises. (2) Public use of feedback data leads to rater leniency and, therefore, it is not valid or useful. (3) Subordinates may fear reprisal, thus a lack of confidentiality can hinder the process. Dalton concludes that multi-rater feedback used for appraisal will not produce change any more than any other quantitative appraisal, and it may damage the credibility of the process. More research is required on how ratings are affected in developmental (private) versus appraisal (public) feedback conditions.

Wayne E. Denton. Developing employee skills to match company needs. *Credit World,* May/June 1994, pp. 19-20.

Denton, a human resources vice-president at Limited Credit Services (LCS) in Columbus, Ohio, describes 360-degree-feedback instruments, their benefits, and the development of a 360-degree system at LCS. The author states that the current rate of change in the world makes individual development necessary to maintain an "edge." Gathering valid and honest information, especially at the executive and managerial levels, is difficult. Thus, it is necessary to have leadership skills assessed in order to find skills and behaviors that need improvement. Denton states that 360-degree-feedback instruments are the most effective type of leadership assessment available by providing a complete picture of performance and effectiveness. The benefits are especially effective in organizations that are trying to focus developmental efforts for managers. The instruments decrease bias and provide candid data to channel managers into appropriate training programs or interventions. Some instruments also provide participants with insight on the values and skills that are necessary for a particular position or organization.

At LCS, an evaluation was needed that rated individuals against strategic issues that the organization valued in its leaders. A 360-degree-feedback instrument was used, showing managers their strengths and weaknesses. The feedback was followed up with the creation of a development plan, involving the manager, his boss, and the assessment facilitator. Re-administering the instrument every eighteen to twenty-four months lets LCS managers benchmark progress, and allows for continuing development of leadership effectiveness.

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Marvin M. Dunnette. My hammer or your hammer? *Human Resource Management* 32:2&3, Summer/Fall 1993, pp. 373-384.

This article reviews several articles found in the 1993 *Human Resource Management* special issue on 360-degree feedback. Dunnette summarizes the main points of these articles and addresses the lack of cohesion that exists in this area of research. He also elaborates on the impact of 360-degree feedback as an emerging human-resources management tool. In addition to its relevance to organizational practices such as appraisal and development initiatives, 360-degree feedback has many psychological aspects: person percep-

tion, impression formation, individuals' conceptions of self, impression management, and behavioral change.

The articles discussed represent themes, issues, and trends that focus on accuracy, content, methodological hazards, and organizational or individual change. Dunnette provides a brief description of five 360-degree-feedback instruments that were investigated by the authors in this special issue. These instruments include Benchmarks®, Campbell Leadership Index™, Executive Success Profile, Management Skills Profile, and Insight-Out. These instruments are designed to provide feedback on managerial strengths and weaknesses.

Colin C. Edwards. 360 degree feedback. *Management Services* 39:6, June 1995, p. 24.

Edwards discusses the emergence of 360-degree feedback as a tool for facilitating personal development. He cautions potential users about the composition of the questions on an assessment survey. Questions should not prompt answers and should focus on removing preconceptions regarding the person being evaluated. He also discusses the feedback received from a 360-degree assessment, which can be surprising and insightful. It can focus on talents, ethics, leadership, personality, habits, and both strengths and weaknesses. The most hurtful criticisms, however, tend to be those regarding interpersonal skills. The information that is uncovered from co-workers can illustrate how limited a person's self-understanding can be.

Edwards also asserts that the impact of feedback is affected by the person's attitude prior to receiving feedback. A person who possesses a positive outlook on development and the feedback process will maximize 360-degree feedback's benefits. Users should also be aware of the ability of the process to harm those that are unable to accept the feedback; restoring such an employee's self-esteem can be a difficult task. In addition, Edwards suggests that 360-degree feedback should only be used for developmental purposes, rather than for pay and performance decision making. He asserts that the use of 360-degree feedback for these purposes could produce invalid results.

Mark R. Edwards and Ann J. Ewen. *360° Feedback: The Powerful New Model for Employee Assessment and Performance Improvement.* New York: American Management Association, 1996, 247 pages.

This book deals with the complexities and sensitive issues surrounding the use of 360-degree feedback for performance appraisal rather than strictly for development. Chapter 1 defines 360-degree feedback and outlines a brief history of its benefits in relation to the changing nature of organizations. Although accepted approaches to 360-degree feedback are varied, the authors describe their technique for implementing and evaluating the process. Chapters 2 and 3 provide background, various approaches, and applications for 360-degree systems.

The next section (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) deals with implementation of a 360-degree system. Chapter 7 discusses common mistakes in the feedback process and how to avoid them. Issues such as technology, confidentiality, safeguards, training, and norm comparisons are addressed. Chapter 8 discusses common criticisms of 360-degree feedback. According to Edwards and Ewen, anticipation of and reaction to criticism is necessary to maximize the possible benefits of 360-degree feedback.

Chapter 9 discusses the impact of 360-degree feedback. It has shown some promise in terms of positive, measurable impact. The authors list the following outcomes: improved employee satisfaction with the work environment, significant behavior changes aligned with the organization's objectives, and better individual and team performance that extends to external customers. The authors describe various ways of measuring impact on performance and development, as well as reaction to feedback. Chapter 10 closes with an outlook for the future of 360-degree feedback.

Susan Gebelein. Employee development: Multi-rater feedback goes strategic. *HRFocus,* January 1996, pp. 1, 4-6.

This article discusses how to build a multi-rater feedback process that will support organizational goals by facilitating employee development that is aligned with corporate strategy. Many 360-degree systems fall short of their potential because they are used merely for individual development and do not support organizational change. There are several phases to implementing multi-rater assessment that will support organizational goals. First, the organization must decide what the assessment is to accomplish by clarifying the

company's goals and strategies; defining the scope of the process; and planning the process in terms of who will participate, how the instrument will be designed, and how often it will be used. Second, the system must be linked to a competency model that defines the skills and behaviors needed by employees in order to achieve the company's goals. Third, planning administration of the instrument involves educating those involved with the process and then determining the strategy for interpreting results. The steps of implementation from this point are sequential: (1) Hold "kickoff" meetings. (2) Roll out the process. (3) Focus on using the feedback for development, rather than for making personnel decisions. (4) Evaluate the process to determine its impact and effectiveness.

Kathleen A. Guinn. Assessment techniques for top executives. *Career Development International* 1:3, 1996, pp. 9-14.

This article discusses the purpose of feedback for executives, barriers to its implementation, and three techniques for providing useful feedback. Individuals within an executive's circle of influence are often reluctant to give feedback openly for fear of reproach. As a result, many top executives do not receive the feedback necessary to change and improve their performance. Also, many executives, having enjoyed success in the past, do not perceive a need to change and may feel a fear of change. The benefits of feedback and development opportunities for executives affect both individuals and organizations, making the assessment a worthwhile pursuit. Three techniques for assessment are offered here: psychological testing, multisource assessment, and individual competence assessments.

Guinn briefly discusses what multisource assessment involves and how its use has grown. Despite the great impact of feedback from multiple sources, some are concerned about the subjectivity of the process. She contends that subjectivity can be decreased by the questionnaire design and certain precautions can ensure the collection of reliable and valid data. Although multisource assessment can be time consuming, the payoff is "rich" and likely to be accepted by executives.

Regardless of how it is collected, feedback should provide information about appropriate behaviors that can be recognized and changed. This can involve the use of a competence model, which describes the appropriate skills for the executive.

Guinn includes four case studies of assessment systems as they relate to evaluation and feedback issues. Executive assessments provide valuable feedback that can be applied to various initiatives within an organization and can affect an organization and its employees by facilitating development.

Eric L. Harvey. Turning performance appraisals upside down. *Human Resource Professional* 7:2, March/April 1994, pp. 30-32.

This article discusses the use of 360-degree feedback for performance-appraisal purposes. Performance appraisals tend to be regarded negatively in the business environment. Harvey attributes this to four common aspects of performance appraisal: (1) Needs cannot be entirely met by one performance evaluation. (2) Appraisals from a single, supervisory source are inherently problematic. (3) The effect of the appraisal and feedback on employee development can be lost or overlooked. (4) Many managers are not capable of providing appropriate evaluations.

Harvey then asserts that there are ways to improve the effectiveness of employee evaluation and performance assessment. He offers three ideas: (1) Supervisory and single-source assessments should be replaced with multi-rater, or 360-degree, feedback collected from various sources. (2) Pay and promotion decisions should be separate from feedback collected for development only. (3) The improvements that result from performance appraisal should be received as positive changes within the organization.

Joy Hazucha, Sarah Hezlett, and Robert J. Schneider. The impact of 360-degree feedback on management skills development. *Human Resource Management* 32:2&3, Summer/Fall 1993, pp. 325-351.

The purpose of this study is to better understand 360-degree feedback as a management-development intervention. It addresses some key questions, including: How do managers' skills develop after feedback? How do initial feedback, development efforts, and environmental support relate to skills development? Which developmental activities are most effective? What affects the level of effort managers put into their development?

At a large midwestern utility company, 198 managers completed the Management Skills Profile (MSP), a 360-degree-feedback instrument. Two

years later, the same managers were given the chance to retake the MSP and, in addition, the Management Development Questionnaire (MDQ). The MDQ is designed to measure effort, change, developmental activities, and support for development. Of the 198 managers, 48 took the MSP twice and also received the follow-up MDQ.

Based on previous research, the authors formulated the following hypotheses:

- **1a**: As a group, skills will improve from the initial assessment (Time 1) to the follow-up (Time 2), as measured by self- and others' ratings.
  1b: The agreement between self- and others' ratings will increase from Time 1 to Time 2.
- **2**: Managers whose skills are rated more highly (at Time 1) will receive larger pay increases and will be more likely to receive promotions between Times 1 and 2.
- **3a**: Managers who put more effort into skill development will be more likely to improve management skills.
  3b: Activities that require follow-through will be more effective than those that focus on understanding results and formulating intentions.
  3c: Managers who receive more support from superiors will be more likely to improve their skills.
  3d: Managers who receive more organizational support will be more likely to improve their skills.
- **4a**: Managers receiving more favorable ratings at Time 1 will be more likely to complete developmental activities.
  4b: Managers whose feedback from others is closer to self-ratings will be more likely to complete developmental activities.

The major finding is that receiving 360-degree feedback was generally helpful, but follow-through on development was the most critical factor in improving skills. These results have implications for (1) how managers can develop their own skills, (2) how supervisors can support others' development, and (3) how the organization can facilitate development. The absence of a comparison group in this study, however, makes determination of the actual effects of 360-degree feedback on skill improvement difficult.

William J. Heisler. 360-degree feedback: An integrated perspective. *Career Development International* 1:3, 1996, pp. 20-23.

This article is a case study of a 360-degree assessment implemented in one of the operating divisions of Tenneco. The company developed a 360-degree assessment to measure nine leadership competencies thought to be necessary to the organization's culture. Heisler uses Tenneco's approach to support the belief that the 360-degree-feedback process must be implemented slowly; it must be seen as more than a data collection system. Heisler suggests that 360-degree assessments be designed to measure behaviors and characteristics that relate to an organization's strategy. The feedback process must also be supported with tools for the analysis and interpretation of data. Finally, he says that the process should be followed by developmental planning for the participants. The purpose of 360-degree systems is not only assessment but also to provide feedback to stimulate improvement and to promote an organization's strategic business objectives.

Marcie S. Hirsch. 360 degrees of evaluation. *Working Woman Magazine.* August 1994, pp. 20-21.

Hirsch provides a description of various aspects of 360-degree-feedback programs, planning, and impact, using information gathered from professionals in the field. She states that dissatisfaction with traditional performance appraisal has increased; in 1992, 68% of companies cited better performance management as a priority.

George Hollenbeck, an organizational psychologist, gives two reasons for the need for better evaluation. First, smaller organizations need to maximize individual effectiveness. Second, employees in downsized organizations need better feedback to alleviate insecurity and stress. Organizations are increasingly using 360-degree feedback to provide more accurate evaluation and effective communication. After 360-degree evaluations are completed, many organizations, with the help of either a human resources professional or an outside consultant, encourage development initiatives. Stride Rite, for example, assists managers with an individual development plan.

Hirsch also discusses preparation for the implementation of a 360-degree-feedback program. Cost varies with program size, degree of customization, and amount of outside consulting involved. Comparison of costs between standardized instruments (for example, Benchmarks® from the

Center for Creative Leadership) and customized programs show customization to be fairly costly.

Whether using a customized program or a standardized instrument, veteran users stress the need for planning. The following five steps are recommended: (1) Establish the program's goals. Linda Kane, of Stride Rite, discusses the importance of disconnecting 360-degree evaluation from pay decisions. She suggests that 360-degree feedback be used for management development and coaching initiatives, while other techniques be used for performance appraisal. (2) Decide who will be evaluated. Options range from comprehensive implementation for all managers to a targeted implementation. Targeting high-potential or low-performing employees can be effective. Implementing feedback assessment across the company can reinforce preferred behaviors. (3) Decide on a standardized program or a customized one. Statistical reliability and validity are strong arguments for standardized instruments, whereas customized instruments are more specific to the needs of the organization. (4) Decide how many evaluations to collect from peers, subordinates, supervisors, and customers. The suggested range is from three to four. The average instrument uses five to ten. (5) Communicate the rules regarding anonymity and use of the feedback. Anonymity and developmental use of feedback will ensure honest evaluations, according to organizational psychologist and consultant Lynn Summers.

Robert Hoffman. Ten reasons you should be using 360-degree feedback. *HR Magazine*, April 1995, pp. 82-85.

Hoffman describes the increased use of 360-degree feedback in organizations. The technique can be used for developmental purposes only, but it is increasingly being used for performance appraisal. It enables companies to "align employee performance with the organization's needs and overall strategy [which] leads to the development of a more involved, less hierarchical work force." Hoffman offers these ten observations about what 360-degree feedback can do: (1) define corporate competencies; (2) increase the focus on customer service; (3) support team initiatives; (4) create a high-involvement workplace; (5) decrease hierarchies and promote streamlining; (6) detect barriers to success; (7) assess developmental needs; (8) lessen discrimination and bias; (9) identify performance thresholds; and (10) be easy to implement.

Hoffman also considers issues that must be addressed to maximize the benefits of 360-degree feedback: (1) How will the process be communicated to the organization? (2) Will the process be combined with other appraisal systems? (3) What training will be provided to the participants? (4) Should outside consultants be used? (5) Should an off-the-shelf program or a customized program be implemented? (6) Is a computer-based evaluation or a paper-and-pencil form best for the organization? Full consideration of these issues should allow for smooth implementation of 360-degree feedback.

Katherine Holt, Raymond A. Noe, and Marcie Cavanaugh. *Managers' Developmental Responses to 360-degree Feedback*. Unpublished manuscript, 1996, 47 pages.

This study investigates the impact of individual differences, feedback characteristics, instrument characteristics, and organizational support on managers' developmental responses to 360-degree feedback. The authors define these individual difference factors: (1) *feedback-seeking behavior:* a manager's propensity to actively seek feedback related to organizational and personal goals, (2) *learning orientation:* an individual's belief regarding whether behavior can be learned and modified, and (3) *self-confidence:* the belief in one's own competence to handle a variety of situations.

Three hypotheses are formed relating to the impact of these individual differences: (1) There is a positive relationship between feedback-seeking orientation and developmental response to 360-degree feedback. (2) There is a positive relationship between learning orientation and developmental response. (3) Self-confidence is positively related to developmental response. Two hypotheses are formed relating to feedback characteristics such as confidentiality, sign (Is the feedback positive or negative?), accuracy, timing, quantity, and specificity: (4) There will be a positive relationship between the number of people who see the feedback and developmental response. (5) There will be a negative relationship between perceived feedback sign and developmental response (that is, negative feedback will elicit more response than positive). The next two hypotheses related to the characteristics of the feedback system: (6) Managers required to participate in development planning discussion will have more response than those not required to plan development. (7) There will be a positive relationship between the completeness of the manager's development plan and developmental response. The final hypotheses relate to the organizational conditions for development:

(8) Organizational support for development will positively relate to managers' response to feedback. (9) Total Quality Management (TQM) will be positively related to managers' developmental response.

A sample of 236 managers from 25 organizations completed the Management Skills Development Profile (a 360-degree instrument from Personnel Decisions, Inc.) two different times. The results were as follows: Characteristics of the feedback and feedback system as well as TQM philosophy were more strongly related to developmental responses than individual differences (self-confidence, learning orientation, feedback-seeking orientation). In fact, individual differences did not affect the impact of the 360-degree feedback (contrary to hypotheses 1 to 3). Contrary to hypothesis 4, characteristics of feedback itself (that is, "publicness") was not positively related to response. The sign of the feedback (hypothesis 5) was not related to developmental response. Hypotheses 6 and 7 were partially supported. Hypotheses 8 and 9 received only limited support; organizational support did not affect developmental impact of the feedback.

The authors suggest that organizations should encourage managers to take initiative in self-development and consider mandating extensive development-planning sessions for 360-degree-feedback programs. The study showed these two factors to have a great deal of impact on the developmental response to the feedback.

John E. Jones and William Bearley. *360° Feedback: Strategies, Tactics, and Techniques for Developing Leaders*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press & Lakewood Publications, 1996, 184 pages.

Jones and Bearley begin by discussing the three major shifts in organizations that make the use of multi-rater feedback necessary. First, focus has shifted from management skills to leadership skills. Second, there has been a shift from dependency to self-responsibility in career planning. Third, there has been a shift from traditional hierarchy and structure to organizational culture. Organizations are best served when they provide employees with information necessary for their own leadership development, and this can best be achieved with multi-rater feedback.

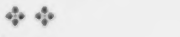
This book is also a how-to manual that describes steps to take and pitfalls to avoid in implementing multi-rater feedback. The authors explore the several common uses for multi-rater feedback: (1) system intervention, (2) team building, (3) components of training or development courses,

(4) assessment of training needs, (5) embedding upward feedback into employee surveys, (6) assessment of training outcomes, (7) return-on-investment analyses regarding development schemes, and (8) linking feedback to performance appraisal.

The authors conclude with chapters that outline the creation and implementation of multi-rater feedback programs, as well as ways of dealing with reliability of programs in general. They assert that no instrument is inherently valid or invalid: "Validity is *always* situation-specific; it does not reside in the questionnaire or its items." They also suggest that results of the assessment be compared to normative data (descriptive statistics on a known group).

According to Jones and Bearley, the most important goal of multi-rater feedback is "to inform and motivate feedback recipients to engage in self-directed action-planning for improvement. It is the feedback process, not the measurement process, that generates the real payoffs." They describe various developmental follow-up strategies that will maximize the payoffs of multi-rater feedback. It is best used to facilitate employee development; however, many organizations are experimenting with multi-rater feedback for performance appraisals.

These two uses differ in one important respect: Performance appraisal is used in retrospect to evaluate what employees have done, whereas multi-rater feedback used for development evaluates how the employees do their jobs. The authors contend that the integration of 360-degree feedback and performance appraisal will require experimentation. Finally, they say that the ideas behind such feedback are not a fad, and that 360-degree feedback is necessary in the shifting climate of organizational paradigms and structure.



Robert E. Kaplan and Charles J. Palus. *Enhancing 360-degree Feedback for Senior Executives.* Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 1994, 19 pages.

This report discusses the use of what the authors refer to as *enhanced 360-degree feedback*. This differs from traditional 360-degree feedback in that it is used for senior-level executives and generally provides them with a "richer feedback experience." The authors give two main reasons why senior executives need this enhanced feedback experience. First, they face a broader range of challenges than other managers. Second, enhanced feedback is more appropriate for the psychological makeup of senior executives, rather than focusing on behavior alone.

Enhanced feedback goes beyond standard 360-degree feedback in both amount and type of data collected. Several types of information are collected with enhanced 360-degree feedback in addition to the data collected by standard 360-degree processes. These are: (1) numerical ratings plus verbatim comments, (2) data from the workplace plus data from personal life, (3) behavioral information plus information on motivation, and (4) data on the present plus information on early history.

Not all of these additional sources need to be used, and sources should be chosen carefully. The more data that are collected, the greater the impact, both positive and negative. This amount of feedback can be overwhelming to its recipients. The risk involved with enhanced feedback can be great, and it is necessary to evaluate all aspects of its use.

The authors lay out a plan for its effective implementation. First, the right feedback-provider staff must be selected. The staff that provides the assessment and feedback should be: competent in management development, proficient in personal development, effective with senior managers, and mature. Second, the right participants must be selected. The authors discuss three ways of selecting participants: (1) the organization nominates a candidate, (2) the candidate volunteers, and (3) the service provider selects the candidate. It is important to note that participation must be voluntary, regardless of who chooses potential participants. One human resources executive observed, "Allowing them to say no is important."

Finally, to safely use enhanced 360-degree feedback, both the service provider and the organization must assist the executive throughout the entire process. This means focusing on these suggestions: (1) The facilitators must prepare the participant. (2) The facilitators should stress the positive aspects of the feedback. (3) The service provider should never "attack" or coerce the participant. (4) The service provider should stay in touch after the feedback session. (5) The service provider should help the executive get "closure." (6) The facilitators should challenge the executive to use the feedback to make real progress. (7) The service provider should build a strong relationship with the client.

According to the authors, "The key to minimizing the risk of using enhanced feedback is to reduce uncertainty." If enhanced feedback is used safely, then the executive gains a unique awareness of his or her impact. Enhanced 360-degree feedback stimulates natural development processes by focusing attention on issues that "might later come to a head on their own."

Manuel London and Richard W. Beatty. 360-degree feedback as a competitive advantage. *Human Resource Management* 32:2&3, Summer/Fall 1993, pp. 353-372.

This article focuses on the use and design of multi-rater programs to gain a competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is defined as "providing a product or service perceived by its customers as adding value and doing so in a way that is unique and difficult for a competitor to readily duplicate." The authors begin by addressing various considerations for 360-degree practice. They assert that the process of developing effective multi-rater feedback involves five steps: (1) establishing and communicating the purpose of the effort, (2) developing the content and format of the assessment, (3) establishing a report format and procedures for distributing results, (4) facilitating the use of the results by managers, and (5) following up to assess progress and improvement. It may also involve training raters to use the process, and training leaders or facilitators to interpret and utilize results for development.

The authors then compare the use of multi-rater instruments for development and for performance appraisal. The primary difference is that performance appraisal requires the measurement of results: *what* is done. Developmental applications require measurement of behaviors and competencies: *how* the job is done. Performance appraisal is performed primarily for "evaluation and organizational consequences, such as pay treatment" or promotion; it is rarely geared toward individual or organizational development. The remainder of this section focuses mainly on similarities and differences between developmental and evaluative use of multi-rater feedback.

The risks and rewards of using multi-rater feedback are also addressed. The rewards can include the improvement of two-way communication, increased formal and informal communication, building effective work relationships, increased employee involvement, and the demonstration of respect for employee opinions. The authors then discuss the process of designing multi-rater feedback systems that reduce risk and maximize reward, thus augmenting competitive advantage. This process focuses on (1) content, (2) involvement of employees in program design, (3) item types and format, (4) item relevance, (5) implementation, (6) frequency, (7) uses for the feedback, (8) self-assessment, and (9) report format.

The article concludes with the authors' call for continued research and development of multi-rater feedback and assessment. The areas in need of research include the types of multi-rater feedback processes, the differential

outcomes of use for development or evaluation, criteria of feedback success, and, most importantly, the use of multi-rater feedback and assessment to gain competitive advantage.

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Manuel London and James W. Smither. Can multi-source feedback change self-evaluation, skill development, and performance? *Personnel Psychology* 48, 1995, pp. 375-390.

This paper explores how 360-degree feedback can go beyond traditional performance appraisal by providing information that can be used for behavior change and employee development. The authors present a model and seven associated propositions specifying how differences in perceptions of performance between the focal individual and his or her co-workers can affect factors such as self-image, goal-setting, behavior, and performance. Components in their model include personal variables, such as feedback-seeking behavior, self-monitoring, and impression management. Situational factors in the model include how the feedback process is implemented and organizational performance standards. According to the authors, the literature on multi-rater feedback has not devoted much attention to these issues.

The authors also discuss two basic assumptions often made about multisource feedback: (1) multi-rater feedback helps the focal individual develop a more accurate self-concept, and (2) multisource feedback provides information that is valuable for development and performance improvement. The first assumption suggests that others' ratings are always accurate compared to self-ratings; however, research has shown that these others often do not agree among themselves. Additionally, there is little direct evidence concerning the effects of multi-rater feedback on performance. There is some evidence that respondents modify their ratings when the purpose of the assessment is performance appraisal, which may result in inaccurate ratings from others.

London and Smither argue that ratings from various sources (for example, bosses, peers, and direct reports) should *not* be combined into a composite "other" rating. These sources often have different perspectives of the focal individual's behavior, and may not agree on that person's level of performance. So, a manager's self-ratings may be in agreement with the ratings of peers but not agree with the ratings of direct reports. When these ratings are combined for feedback, the focal individual cannot determine if his or her self-ratings agree or disagree with the ratings from the various

sources. This can have a negative impact on the usefulness of these ratings for developmental purposes.

The authors conclude by summarizing research issues and methods that can be used to improve the understanding and effectiveness of multisource feedback.

Joann S. Lublin. Turning the tables: Underlings evaluate bosses. *The Wall Street Journal,* October 4, 1994, p. B1.

This article describes the impact of 360-degree assessment in view of its recent increased use, particularly the impact of upward feedback (that is, from subordinates upward). The author states that AT&T recently implemented upward feedback (alone or as a 360-degree program) with over 68,000 managers in a year. Paul Jones, a performance-improvement manager at Dow Chemical Company, asserts that ensuring proper leadership is essential for organizations to keep a competitive edge. Proponents of 360-degree assessments contend that feedback from multiple levels is effective because it provides valuable insights to managerial performance.

One of the criticisms of upward feedback is the problem with collecting accurate ratings. It is also difficult for some managers to accept feedback, especially from their subordinates. Both of these factors can diminish the impact and effectiveness of 360-degree feedback.

Many companies support the use of 360-degree feedback for development and training but avoid its use for pay decisions. Many professionals feel that using upward feedback for pay decisions can affect the acceptance and impact of the feedback. The article ends with an anecdote from Allied Signal Inc. that illustrates how fear of retribution can affect the accuracy of upward feedback in 360-degree systems.

Kate Ludeman. To fill the feedback void. *Training and Development,* August 1995, pp. 38-41.

This article describes the necessity for and process of gathering feedback for senior-level executives who, Ludeman contends, do not receive adequate feedback from peers and subordinates. Thus, they work in what she calls a *feedback void,* which results in unexpected consequences resulting

from unknown performance deficiencies. The feedback void is created when managers move up in organizations, become less effective, and no longer recognize their impact on the organization.

Ludeman presents a three-part process for obtaining feedback, which includes: (1) a 360-degree-assessment instrument, customized to measure specific problem areas, (2) the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®), and (3) the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (a personality measure designed to be administered by psychologists). This process leads to employee openness, problem confrontation, and upward communication. Enriched performance by top executives will have a positive effect on an organization that relates directly to the bottom line. Honest and effective feedback can prevent surprises and costly misunderstandings on the executive level.

Marc Marchese and John J. McGowan. The power of 360-degree feedback. *Pennsylvania CPA Journal,* December 1995, pp. 19, 47.

The authors describe 360-degree feedback, how it works, and some drawbacks to its increasing use. Traditional appraisals often set performance goals and encourage employees to develop on their own. However, 360-degree feedback offers a broader perspective of performance and assists managers who, because of management downsizing, now supervise more subordinates. It utilizes evaluations from supervisors, peers, subordinates, and self, which are collected through anonymous questionnaires. Responses are then interpreted by the facilitators of the assessment.

The authors state that 360-degree feedback can be very influential, and the process offers these additional advantages: (1) It reinforces the belief in a customer-driven approach to success, (2) it empowers the workforce by making every opinion count, and (3) it provides a more accurate view of performance.

The drawbacks of 360-degree assessment discussed here include issues that affect the impact of the feedback, such as not all participants will accurately fill out questionnaires in a timely manner. Some may consider the assessment to be a distraction. Also, in order to elicit change, an employee must be open to the feedback and be seeking development. More time is required for 360-degree systems than for traditional appraisals, and the design of the system can affect its developmental impact. Finally, using 360-degree assessments for pay and promotion decisions often adds bias to the responses.

In addition, the quality of the questionnaire, the purpose of the system, and organizational culture and support can affect the impact of the feedback.

Despite its drawbacks, 360-degree feedback is becoming an increasingly popular method of assessment and is used by companies such as UPS, AT&T, Amoco, General Mills, and Procter & Gamble.

Michelle Martinez. Multi-source better describes peer feedback. *HR Magazine* 40:6, June 1995, p. 16.

The article begins with a quote from Karen Stoneman of Watson Wyatt Company's organizational effectiveness division. She says that strictly upward feedback is being replaced by 360-degree feedback, and that most companies aspire to use the 360-degree-feedback process. Most companies, however, are not truly using 360-degree feedback, but are using 180-degree feedback instead.

David Gartenburg, a staff consultant at Rohm and Haas, a chemical specialty company, is in the process of developing a guide for effective multi-rater feedback programs. In his research, he concluded that performance management was a top concern with employees, followed by concern for rewards and recognition. The time consumed by the feedback process was also a concern. In response, Gartenburg asserts that "if people took the time to talk about performance right after an event occurred, these programs wouldn't be necessary."

Cynthia D. McCauley and Russell S. Moxley. Developmental 360: How feedback can make managers more effective. *Career Development International* 1:3, 1996, pp. 15-19.

This paper examines the impact of 360-degree feedback as part of a larger development process. The authors summarize three conclusions about self-awareness and development based on their research on management development and on their work with managers: (1) People can learn, grow, and change to become better leaders and managers, (2) self-awareness is the cornerstone of development, and (3) development is an ongoing process intricately related to work.

McCauley and Moxley assert that the role of 360-degree feedback is to allow managers to compare their self-views with the views of others. It encourages the manager to align self-views with others' views and demonstrates others' recognition of a manager's weaknesses. This enhancement of self-awareness can lead to an "unfreezing" process, whereby a manager is motivated to rethink his or her behavior and its impact on others.

Receiving feedback is only one step of the development process. Its impact serves as one factor in unfreezing the self-view and subsequent efforts to improve or change behavior. The development process involves: (1) unfreezing the self-view by providing a manager with good data from multiple perspectives and encouraging openness to the feedback, (2) maximizing subsequent efforts to improve by creating a development plan that is acted on, and (3) ensuring organizational support for development.

The authors also discuss the issues involved with 360-degree feedback (validity, rater confidentiality, design of the feedback process, goals and development planning) as each affects the stages of development. Unlike feedback assessments for decision-making purposes, 360-degree feedback used for development is a part of an ongoing process. It should not replace the seeking of informal feedback in the workplace, nor should it be a one-time event. The impact of 360-degree feedback will be diminished if the feedback is not handled in a way that is accepted by the manager.

Robert McGarvey and Scott Smith. When workers rate the boss. *Training*, March 1993, pp. 31-34.

The authors discuss the growth in popularity of upward feedback and discuss various aspects of its implementation in an organization. They state that upward feedback is powerful because it provides a unique perspective for managers; subordinates are often in the best position to evaluate a manager's performance. To truly experience the benefits of upward feedback, encouraging informal feedback is not enough. The process must be instrumented and facilitated to maximize benefits with the "least amount of pain." Fear of reprisal for negative ratings is a concern of many subordinates. Whether using an off-the-shelf or custom-designed instrument, confidentiality is a necessity.

Even when confidentiality is ensured, McGarvey and Smith contend, the fear of reprisal can remain a problem until organizations become more experienced with using upward feedback. Additionally, the managers being rated often have fears about subordinate feedback for the following reasons:

(1) Employees may not be sensitive to the pressures of managerial positions and may have biases, and (2) employees may be influenced by recent events—a problem known as *recency*—and fail to consider the entire period of time being evaluated. To alleviate fears from both raters and ratees, the authors suggest training. H. John Bernardin, professor of management at Florida Atlantic University, states that, with training, it is possible for employees to give an unbiased rating. Also with 360-degree feedback, individual biases may be balanced out by other raters in the group.

There are many different options in the implementation of upward feedback. The authors suggest that this feedback be used for developmental purposes only to help managers recognize their weaknesses. They also address instruments that compare feedback results to norms or to other managers' results, discussing the Center for Creative Leadership's SkillScope® and Benchmarks®, as well as Personnel Decisions' Profilor® instruments. These instruments use upward feedback as part of a multi-rater assessment.

Help with interpreting the feedback can be a major factor in a manager's reaction to and acceptance of what can be surprising results. The use of outside consultants is compared to the use of in-house human-resources professionals to interpret data.

The authors also discuss how to choose a 360-degree-feedback instrument. For example, there are four main considerations in choosing an off-the-shelf product: (1) content, (2) length, (3) research, and (4) cost. They conclude with ideas on the frequency and timing of using 360-degree feedback.

Kathleen Melymuka. I'm OK, you're OK. *ComputerWorld*, November 7, 1994, pp. 89-96.

Melymuka describes 360-degree feedback, why it is effective, and discusses various issues involved with implementing 360-degree assessments. One purpose of implementing a 360-degree system, she states, is to evaluate self-managed teams and to support the use of team feedback. Depending on corporate culture and commitment, 360-degree feedback can provide effective and honest feedback that affects participants. Two impediments to success of a 360-degree system exist, one emotional and one administrative. Emotionally, feedback that is honest can be unsettling. Administratively, organizations must decide on the details of implementation.

There are certain issues that must be resolved before a 360-degree system can be successfully implemented: (1) confidentiality of raters, (2) purpose of the feedback (pay and job security or development only), and (3) time and cost involved with the process. Melymuka also gives testimony from various professionals and users of 360-degree systems on its overall effectiveness.

John F. Milliman, Robert A. Zawacki, Carol Norman, Lynda Powell, and Jay Kirksey. Companies evaluate employees from all perspectives. *Personnel Journal,* November 1994, pp. 99-103.

The authors provide a brief summary of the use of 360-degree assessment and feedback for performance appraisal. Rater groups are divided into two categories: internal and external customers. Internal customers are those who work with the ratee in their organization. External customers can include clients, suppliers, consultants, and community officials. The authors conclude that, in general, 360-degree appraisals provide a broader view of performance, and they give specific reasons that this is beneficial.

The authors also mention issues that an organization must resolve in order to use 360-degree appraisal effectively. These include the number of raters and their relationship with the ratee, criteria by which employees should be judged, and the number of items on the appraisal form. Other considerations are confidentiality of raters and summarizing of data.

There are also disadvantages inherent in the use of 360-degree feedback. These disadvantages are identified and solutions and implications are offered. Even when used for appraisal, the authors conclude that 360-degree assessments provide only a "means to an end," and fail to provide a "final judgment." It is necessary for organizations to develop a plan and change process to implement 360-degree appraisals. Employees should also receive training related to the evaluation process and instruments. The discussion is supported with examples of appraisal processes used at Johnson & Johnson, Advanced Behavioral Technology, Digital Equipment Corporation, and Hamilton Standard Commercial Aircraft.

Allan M. Mohrman, Jr., Susan M. Resnick-West, and Edward E. Lawler, III. *Designing Performance Appraisal Systems.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990, pp. 90-106, 160-184.

The two chapters in this book that address multi-rater appraisals discuss how to determine who appraises performance (Chapter 4) and legal considerations of appraisals (Chapters 7 and 8).

In Chapter 4, the authors state that choosing the right people to appraise an employee's performance will help the accuracy of an appraisal. In choosing appraisers, one factor to consider is the context of the appraisal. There are both organizational-design issues (functional design, team design, or matrix design) and management-style issues (controlling or empowering). The authors also consider each possible source of appraisal (supervisor, peer, subordinate, customer, and self) and describe the particular perspective that each provides. Each appraiser tends to focus on particular performance aspects, which is useful for specific appraisal purposes, and the authors discuss the effectiveness of each possible appraiser in various organizational settings. This discussion evaluates the conditions and purposes for which certain appraisers are more relevant than others.

Chapter 7 deals primarily with legal considerations in the use of appraisal systems for pay, promotion, and rewards. There are two main considerations in designing and implementing performance appraisals: (1) what is being measured, and (2) the process by which measurements are made. To eliminate discrimination, appraisals must measure appropriate and work-oriented performance. The process must be monitored and audited for any content that is not related to performance. Data collected by the process should be valid, job-oriented, and objective. Choosing appropriate appraisers and training will help to obtain valid data. Also, the appraisal system should be an open process that allows employees to react to the data and to appeal, if necessary.

Chapter 8 discusses application considerations for the use of performance feedback for pay and promotion. The decision to tie pay and promotion to performance appraisals is complicated. The potential negative effects are as great as the potential benefits (that is, fairness and organizational impact), depending on the development and implementation of the process. Essentially, the authors assert that the use of feedback for pay decisions can potentially affect the data collected by the process. The overall validity of the data is key to system effectiveness, and it affects the organizational and developmental impact of the feedback.

Joel Moses, George P. Hollenbeck, and Melvin Sorcher. Other people's expectations. *Human Resource Management* 32:2&3, Summer/Fall 1993, pp. 283-297.

This article discusses possible limitations of 360-degree-feedback instruments. The authors assert that these limitations are the result of: (1) reliance on generalized traits, (2) limited or nonexistent frame of reference for ratings, (3) a memory-based, often incomplete description of past performance, (4) the inability of observers to interpret behavior, and (5) the reliance on the instrument's designer for interpretation of data.

The key to the limitations of these instruments is their lack of situation-based context. Most instruments rely on Other People's Observations (OPOs) as the basis for the assessment. Using observation-based judgments leaves the rater free to establish the context for the rating. Observers, to preserve accuracy, need a situational context on which to base their judgments. The authors, therefore, differentiate the measurement of OPOs from the measurement of Other People's Expectations (OPEs). Using OPEs as the basis for judgment leads to the measurement of how a person will behave in a specific situation. The authors assert that OPEs, because they are situation specific, will provide the raters and ratee with a more accurate frame of reference. They discuss the development of their instrument (Insight-Out), which was designed to measure OPEs.

Many people are not aware of the expectations others hold for them. Awareness of OPEs allows for more constructive suggestions for change. The authors believe that OPE feedback information allows individuals to manage the expectations of others. The quality and usefulness of 360-degree feedback will improve with increased attention to situation specificity.

George P. Nicholas. Upward trend continues in appraisal process. *HR Focus*, September 1992, p. 17.

Nicholas discusses two reasons for the increasing popularity of upward feedback. First, more managers are seeking upward appraisal as a way of obtaining candid, usable information. Even if the information is not used for pay or promotion decisions, it can still motivate managers to change. Also, subordinate comments may reveal managerial talents and strengths that might otherwise be unrecognized. Upward appraisal is also gaining attention because it supports the shifting emphasis on the manager's role as a coach.

Janina Latack, associate professor of management at The Ohio State University, asserts that a coach must have an accurate assessment of how he or she is perceived by the people who are being coached.

Nicholas discusses a coaching/mentoring process called Helping Others Succeed, developed by Blessing-White, a New Jersey-based human-resources consulting firm. In this process, managers first complete a self-assessment, then they participate in a workshop where ways to improve their coaching skills are discussed, using the feedback. This initial discussion is followed by subsequent progress evaluations, which feature face-to-face subordinate feedback addressing specific coaching skills.

Latack suggests that face-to-face feedback be incorporated under two conditions. First, the employees must trust the organization in general. Second, the employees must feel that the managers they are appraising are credible and interested in their development.

Dianne Nilsen and David P. Campbell. Self-observer rating discrepancies: Once an overrater, always an overrater? *Human Resource Management* 32:2&3, Summer/Fall 1993, pp. 265-281.

This article discusses the nature of self-observer rating differences as they occur in 360-degree feedback. Research has generally focused on situational factors of self-assessment accuracy. Although situations do affect one's motivation to accurately report self-perceptions, the authors focus on whether some individuals' self-ratings are more accurate than others regardless of the context.

The authors conducted a test-retest reliability study to answer two questions: (1) Is self-observer rating discrepancy a stable individual difference or merely a "fleeting phenomenon"? (2) Is the tendency to overrate, underrate, or accurately rate one's self stable over time and does it generalize across dimensions?

The first part of the study determined the stability of self-observer rating discrepancies. The Campbell Leadership Index™, a multi-rater assessment instrument, was completed by thirty-one female managers. One month later, the managers completed the instrument again, as did the same raters from the initial assessment. The results were that the discrepancy between self- and observer ratings appeared to be stable.

The second part of the study looked at whether self-observer discrepancies generalize across dimensions. High-level executives and low- to mid-

level managers were rated by the Executive Skills Profile and the Management Skills Profile, respectively. In general, this study showed that individuals who over-, under-, or accurately rate themselves in one area are likely to do so in another area. Also, the study suggested that such discrepancies in personality assessments are related to discrepancies in skill assessments.

The authors concluded that: (1) The stability of self-observer rating discrepancies suggests that they can provide useful information. (2) Accuracy in self-perception is a stable individual difference. (3) Knowledgeable observers' ratings are more valid and accurate than self-ratings. (4) Accurate self-raters are better able to improve performance than inaccurate self-raters. (5) Personality assessments might be more valid using observer ratings rather than self-ratings.

Kenneth M. Nowack. Self-assessment and rater assessment as a dimension of management development. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Summer 1992, pp. 141-155.

In this study, the congruence between self-assessments and the assessments of others (supervisors, peers, direct reports) was investigated. Ratings for 335 managers were used to compare self-ratings to others' ratings on several management dimensions. The results indicated that the amount of agreement between self and others was relatively low, with self-ratings being significantly higher than the ratings of others. According to Nowack, many managers tend to be more aware of their strengths and less cognizant of their developmental needs. This inflated self-view may actually interfere with their development as managers because they may not recognize the need for improvement.

Nowack argues that managerial behavior change is a function of: (1) awareness of individual strengths and developmental needs, (2) the motivation to change, and (3) the capability to change specific behaviors. One of the strengths of 360-degree feedback is that it exposes differences between the managers' self-perceptions and the perceptions of others, which may motivate them to pursue developmental activities. When differences exist between self- and others' ratings, the differences should be explored, possibly leading to positive behavior and performance improvement.

Kenneth M. Nowack. 360-degree feedback: The whole story. *Training and Development,* January 1993, pp. 69-72.

Nowack discusses key issues related to the selection and development of a 360-degree-feedback instrument. He gives five reasons for the increased use of 360-degree systems for feedback: (1) the need for a cost-effective alternative to assessment centers, (2) increasing availability of assessment software, (3) the need for continuous measurement in continuous-improvement efforts, (4) the need for feedback for career-plateaued employees, and (5) the need to maximize employees' potential.

Before deciding to purchase a feedback instrument or to develop one, an organization must first decide what is to be measured. Off-the-shelf instruments are designed on five basic models: (1) *job analysis:* measures knowledge, skills, and abilities based on a traditional analysis of the position of interest (for example, managerial); (2) *competency-based*: measures behaviors as compared to high performers and low performers; (3) *strategic planning*: measures knowledge, skills, and abilities based on an organization's strategic plans; (4) *developmental theory*: measures knowledge, skills, and abilities based on theoretical and conceptual models of employee growth and development; and (5) *personality theory*: measures knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with personality factors.

An organization must also decide on issues such as scoring, confidentiality and anonymity, ownership of results, and instrument validity. Nowack discusses each of these issues and provides examples of various applications.

Brian O'Reilly. 360-degree feedback can change your life. *Fortune,* October 17, 1994, pp. 93-100.

This article provides an overview of current practices and thinking related to 360-degree feedback, as well as examples of its impact. The author first asserts that 360-degree feedback, as it is now applied, should be used only for developmental purposes and is not effective as an appraisal tool. When used for performance appraisal, rating biases can influence the outcome. The author addresses the fact that, even when feedback is not used for appraisal, it can still be surprising and sometimes difficult for managers to accept. He concludes that expected feedback creates the most potential for learning.

O'Reilly gives various examples of managers' experiences that support this conclusion. This powerful feedback is also being used for cultural change associated with the shift to teamwork and employee empowerment. Often, to elicit change, managers need massive "doses" of feedback, such as those offered in week-long programs provided by the Center for Creative Leadership.

The author also notes the different ways people rate themselves and describes three types of raters: high self-raters, low self-raters, and accurate self-raters. Finally, he summarizes conditions that are necessary for feedback to be effective. First, the participant has to want to change. Next, recipients of feedback should discuss results with everyone who provided ratings. Finally, the focus of development should be on only a few shortcomings, and concrete remedies should be chosen. The author closes with two examples of feedback programs designed by executives to promote their company's "vision" to their employees.

Shirley Parker-Gore. Perception is reality: Using 360-degree appraisal against behavioral competencies to effect organizational change and improve management performance. *Career Development International* 1:3, 1996, pp. 24-27.

Parker-Gore is the head of employee development at Mercury One 2 One Corporation, and presents a case study of their process for identifying managerial skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary for effective performance. The first step involved focus groups of managers to determine what skills were necessary in various roles and how behaviors were critical to the company goals. This led to defining a behavioral model for managers called Personal Success Factors. The next step was to implement a 360-degree appraisal designed to measure these factors. Essentially, the organization assessed managerial competencies and used development plans to address the "shortfalls in relation to business goals and targets." In exploring the results of this process, managers have become aware of competence models and how specific behaviors and skills relate to business success, as well as the positive use of 360-degree feedback.

The author asserts that competencies can be used for both organizational development and individual performance management. One 2 One uses data collected from 360-degree assessments to review performance and to facilitate development. Ratings are sought from appropriate sources, and the

feedback is compared to a success profile (competence model), which is thought to be critical for success and development in a changing business environment. Finally, for an effective tool to reach its potential, it must be a process owned by the participants. This will facilitate the shift toward an interactive and interdependent culture that maximizes team performance and produces a flexible, learning organization.

Helen Peters. Peer coaching for executives. *Training and Development* 50:3, March 1996, pp. 39-41.

In this article, Peters describes a program utilized at National Semiconductor, a microchip manufacturing company, to enhance management and leadership skills. The program was designed as a two-phase plan to facilitate corporate transformation. Phase one consisted of making the company viable, and employed downsizing, manufacturing consolidation, and product-pruning strategies. Phase two began with executives and managers establishing a leadership model, against which their own competencies would be assessed.

The assessment of these leadership and management skills involved extensive use of multi-rater feedback. The feedback was used to help develop employees being paired into peer-coaching partnerships. These partnerships used the multi-rater feedback as a basis for identifying development goals.

The author then describes a five-step process for using multi-rater feedback with peer-coaching partnerships: (1) *The Contract*: Individuals commit to the partnership and coaching roles are assigned. Individuals are responsible for performance and must provide their own motivation to change. (2) *The Discussion*: Partners analyze the multi-rater feedback they have received and extract key themes. (3) *The Plan*: Partners distill the themes from the feedback and determine specific behavioral and performance goals. (4) *Ongoing Sessions*: Partners agree on times, generally once a month, to meet formally. The purpose of these meetings is to review progress and create necessary action plans. (5) *The Follow-up/Reassessment*: Partners formally review all of the progress made toward established goals, six to eight months after initial goals are set.

Catherine Romano. Fear of feedback. *Management Review*, December 1993, pp. 38-41.

Romano discusses some of the following issues regarding 360-degree feedback and then provides four case studies. She asserts that as the traditional, top-down performance appraisal technique is becoming less effective, the use of upward feedback is gaining recognition. The nature of supervisor-subordinate relationships is changing as organizations flatten and emphasize teamwork. Training and development is the most common use of 360-degree feedback; however, as the value of such feedback is recognized and the process becomes familiar, managers increasingly want to link 360-degree feedback to appraisal for pay and promotions.

Also, many managers are threatened by upward feedback if it is used for decision making, thus the information can be ineffective. Brian Davis, of Personnel Decisions, Inc., suggests using 360-degree feedback for development until the process becomes familiar. He also recommends an "Olympic" rating system, where the highest and lowest scores are disregarded.

Romano concludes that the use of 360-degree programs will help managers eliminate the fear of feedback. She includes four case studies of 360-degree systems used at AT&T, MassMutual Insurance, Amoco Corporation, and Deloitte & Touche.

Warren Shaver, Jr. How to build and use a 360-degree feedback system. *Info-Line*. American Society for Training and Development, August 1995, 16 pages.

The author discusses various pitfalls and benefits of using a multi-rater system. First he talks about the four ways to implement multi-rater feedback systems: Buy an off-the-shelf instrument, hire outside consultants, build an internal system, or use a combination of any of these. Regardless of the type of feedback system used, it must be reliable and consistent, valid, easy to use, and should create positive change.

Second, Shaver says that because 360-degree feedback is a relatively new and subtle technique (that can be potentially harmful), it is important to understand the process of setting up a system for using it. He provides these five steps: (1) Design and plan the process. Key factors are deciding who will rate and be rated, ensuring fairness, utilizing timing, and ensuring confidentiality. (2) Design and develop the instrument. Focusing the instrument on the

organization's vision can ensure that it is relevant to the future of the organization. (3) Administer the instrument. The format of the feedback system (for example, questionnaire design) affects the overall success of the assessment. (4) Process and report the feedback. Shaver cautions against problems of inaccurate transcription, editing, and slow processing. (5) Plan responses to the feedback. Receiving the data is only the first step in a manager's development process. Creating and adhering to an action plan is where the improvement actually occurs. In this regard, there are three sources of help for managers using feedback for development: one-on-one facilitators, group discussions or workshops, and workbooks.

The use of 360-degree feedback invariably raises some concerns. Shaver asserts that relatively little is known about the impact of 360-degree feedback. Also, many professionals are inexperienced with 360-degree feedback; therefore, training is essential to implementing a system. Finally, the author discusses the use of external customers as sources of feedback and the use of feedback for performance appraisal and pay.

James W. Smither, Manuel London, Nicholas L. Vasilopoulos, Richard R. Reilly, Roger E. Millsap, and Nat Salvemini. An examination of the effects of an upward feedback program over time. *Personnel Psychology* 48, 1995, pp. 1-34.

This article describes a study of the effects of upward feedback on changes in managerial performance over time. The effects of (1) receiving feedback, (2) completing self-ratings, (3) the manager's initial level of performance, and (4) the subordinate's familiarity with the manager were investigated by using goal-setting, control, and social-cognition theory.

There are two main hypotheses: (1) Managers whose initial level of performance is low will be motivated to improve their performance, and (2) managers whose initial performance level is low will improve when their self-evaluations are *higher* than subordinate ratings. However, managers whose initial self *and* subordinate ratings are low will not be motivated to change (that is, have low aspiration level). The study also examined factors affecting the observation of managerial behavior.

In the study, an upward-feedback program was administered to 238 managers. The program was then used six months later, and the results were compared to measure performance change. Respondents rated performance in areas such as commitment to quality, communications, support of subordi-

nates, and fairness. The results were that managers whose initial performance was low or moderate improved after the feedback. However, managers with high initial performance did not improve. Finally, opportunities to observe behavior apparently increased after the initial assessment. Further implications and questions raised by the study are discussed.

Sandra Sweet (Ed.). *Human Resource Management: Compensation Reporter.* Riverwoods, IL: CCH Incorporated, September 1995, pp. 3741.1-3741.29.

This report discusses the uses and implementation of 360-degree feedback and examines three sample instruments. Sweet asserts that 360-degree assessment is an important method in the search for reliable, fair, and valid evaluation. According to the 1994 Performance Management Survey performed by Hewitt Associates, only 6% of 437 companies surveyed used formal 360-degree programs. It is primarily used to assess developmental needs, but it is being used more frequently for performance appraisal to determine promotions and pay.

Multi-rater feedback is also being used for team-building purposes—how a company uses the feedback will depend on its objectives. The report gives various experts' opinions on implementation. They primarily advise that 360-degree feedback be used for individual development, rather than for performance decisions. Additionally, 360-degree feedback offers the organization an opportunity to reinforce business goals and values.

There are generally ten steps to arranging and implementing 360-degree feedback: (1) Set objectives. (2) Decide if participation is mandatory or voluntary. (3) Decide who will be assessed. (4) Select the competencies, behaviors, and values to be assessed. (5) Write the questions. (6) Test the questions. (7) Decide the response format. (8) Determine the method for administration. (9) Set a schedule. (10) Arrange training or developmental activities. Training is important for preparing both raters and those who will be assessed. Confidentiality should be emphasized and ensured for participants. If the data are not private, then the ratings can be biased and ineffective.

The report gives examples of two types of 360-degree-feedback instruments, Benchmarks® and SkillScope®, and TEAMS, Inc., showing how their impact is the creation of workable action or developmental plans. Various approaches are presented for the interpretation of the feedback and the

design of the development plan, as well as pitfalls to avoid. The report suggests using various safeguards that have been implemented at DuPont. The final section discusses a case study of the 360-degree-feedback program used at AT&T.

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TEAMS, Inc. *Multi-source, 360° Feedback Survey Results.* Tempe, AZ: Author, October 1995, 11 pages.

A survey about multisource feedback was distributed to 6,600 human resources professionals. These professionals were attendees at various national conferences, including those of the American Society for Training and Development, the Society of Human Resource Managers, and the American Compensation Association. Surveys were also sent to people on the TEAMS, Inc., mailing list. The survey was designed to determine who was using 360-degree feedback and how it was being used, and to determine the keys to successful implementation. Information was also gathered regarding various organizations' 360-degree project guidelines and practices. Survey results are summarized from the 97 surveys that were returned.

The survey first determined how many organizations were using 360-degree feedback for developmental purposes and for performance-management purposes. Assessment-for-development-only was the most common form of 360-degree feedback (24%). Only 8.7% of companies used 360-degree feedback for performance management.

The survey then asked for the following information about multisource feedback: (1) the reasons for moving to multisource assessment, (2) how multisource information is used, (3) targeted groups for multisource assessment, (4) group size, (5) who initiated the multisource assessment process, (6) use of standardized versus customized instruments, (7) how raters are chosen, (8) features of multisource systems, (9) how often assessment processes are used, (10) number of feedback recipients, (11) number of different instruments used, (12) time needed to complete each survey, (13) number of points on the rating scale, (14) number of items on the instrument, (15) who initiates the process, (16) data capture medium (paper, disk, phone, etc.), (17) timing of the feedback, (18) feedback given at a focal point (all at one time) or distributed over time, (19) sharing results with supervisors (encouraged or discouraged), (20) measures taken for process effect or impact, and (21) organizational demographics.

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Walter W. Tornow. Perceptions or reality: Is multi-perspective measurement a means or an end? *Human Resource Management* 32:2&3, Summer/Fall 1993, pp. 221-229.

The author examines whether multi-rater assessment is an end in itself (the scientific perspective) or a means to an end (the practical perspective). The goal of the scientist, who sees measurement as an end in itself, is to enhance the accuracy of measurement by reducing error and rater variation. The practitioner, on the other hand, values the differing input of raters because this input represents "significant and meaningful sources of variation from which much can be learned." Tornow equates the practitioner in this scenario to a manager in an organization. The manager uses multi-rater feedback as an insightful and valid means to an end.

The author also discusses research on the agreement between self and other ratings. There are three "core assumptions" that relate to the discrepancy between self and other ratings, which are found in many management and leadership development programs: (1) Awareness of how one's skills and behaviors are seen by others is a key to managerial effectiveness, (2) managers need to improve in the area of self-objectivity, and (3) self-other agreement can be enhanced with feedback (self-other differences motivate managers to alter their self-views and/or improve their performance).

Tornow believes that when multi-rater programs use rater discrepancies as feedback, they become powerful tools for development. Multiple-rater assessments, in order to be effective development tools, must focus on the multiple perceptions of the raters, rather than on measurement as an end in itself.

Ellen Van Velsor and Jean B. Leslie. *Feedback to Managers, Volume II: A Review and Comparison of Sixteen Multi-rater Feedback Instruments*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 1991, 276 pages.

This volume is a comparison of sixteen widely used multi-rater assessment instruments. It focuses on those instruments that "relate self-view to the views of others on multiple management or leadership domains." First, information was collected by contacting the authors and publishers of the twenty-four instruments reviewed in the original *Feedback to Managers* (1978). Then, an on-line computer literature search was conducted using

behavioral science and business indexes. Finally, remaining reference manuals were examined and other authors and vendors were contacted.

The information received for each of the sixteen instruments was divided into three categories: descriptive information, research information, and training information. Descriptive information includes the author(s), vendor, copyright date(s), statement of purpose, target audience, cost, scoring process, certification process, instrument length, item-response format, and type(s) of raters. Research information includes the item origins, feedback scales, scale definitions and sample items, and written reports or data from studies of the instrument's reliability and validity. The training information for each instrument includes a copy of the instrument, a sample feedback report, and any support materials (instructional or developmental) provided for trainers or participants.

A comprehensive summary of each instrument is added at the end of the report. Although each of the instruments met acceptable standards of instrument development, they are only a sample of what is available. Their inclusion in this report does not indicate that they would necessarily be suitable for the needs of all organizations. The sixteen instruments included are: ACUMEN® Group Feedback, Benchmarks®, Campbell Leadership Index™, COMPASS: The Managerial Practices Survey, Executive Success Profile, Leader Behavior Analysis II™, The Visionary Leader: Leader Behavior Questionnaire, Leadership Practices Inventory, Life Styles Inventory®, Management Effectiveness Profile System, Management Skills Profile, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, PRAXIS®, Survey of Leadership Practices, The Survey of Management Practices, and SYMLOG®.

Note: An updated edition of this volume with all new instruments will be published by the Center for Creative Leadership in the first quarter of 1998.

Ellen Van Velsor, Jean B. Leslie, and John W. Fleenor. *Choosing 360: A Guide to Evaluating Multi-rater Feedback Instruments for Management Development*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 1997, 56 pages.

In this volume, the authors address the expanded use of multi-rater assessment instruments and affirm the need for an up-to-date reference manual describing an evaluation process for these instruments. This update to *Feedback to Managers, Volume I: A Guide to Evaluating Multi-rater Feed-*

back Instruments (Center for Creative Leadership, 1991) is designed to assist human resources professionals in the assessment of 360-degree-feedback instruments.

This report presents a simplified and comprehensive model for analyzing multi-rater feedback instruments. A step-by-step process is presented by which any multi-rater feedback instrument can be evaluated. Evaluation focuses on the use of these instruments for developmental purposes, and does not address the use or design of products for performance appraisal.

The volume divides the evaluation into sixteen sequential steps: (1) Find out what is available. (2) Collect a complete set of materials. (3) Compare your intended use to instrument characteristics. (4) Examine feedback scales. (5) Familiarize yourself with the instrument-development process. (6) Learn how items and feedback scales were developed. (7) Find out how consistent scores tend to be. (8) Assess basic aspects of validity: Does the instrument measure what it claims to measure? (9) Think about face validity. (10) Examine the response scale. (11) Evaluate the feedback display. (12) Understand how breakout of rater responses is handled. (13) Learn what strategies are used to facilitate interpretation of scores. (14) Look for development and support materials. (15) Compare cost and value for the price. (16) Consider length a minor issue.

Applications for each step are discussed. Although the steps are not equal in complexity and importance, the authors suggest that critical decisions should be made early in the process to eliminate instruments that are either not valid or do not meet the organization's needs. And, although no instrument is perfect in structure, content, and applicability, careful evaluation will allow users to make trade-offs in order to select the most appropriate instrument for their needs.

Mary N. Vinson. The pros and cons of 360-degree feedback: Making it work. *Training and Development*, April 1996, pp. 11-12.

Vinson begins by discussing a 1993 survey that indicated that most employees were dissatisfied with their organization's performance appraisal system. Other studies, however, show that employees value knowing where they stand and what they must do to improve. Vinson offers 360-degree, or multi-rater, feedback as an alternative to traditional feedback. She begins by discussing the benefits of using this type of feedback. She asserts that 360-degree feedback can be effective when it is accompanied by a follow-up

session. Many companies have used 360-degree feedback as part of total quality management efforts. As such, it may be useful for promoting "team cohesiveness." It also tends to reduce rating bias because the responsibility for feedback involves more people than in traditional, single-source, downward appraisal.

The author also discusses the downsides of 360-degree feedback. First, it can be painful. Many feedback experts believe that the respondent providing the harshest criticism is often considered "untrustworthy" by the recipient. Second, there are often conflicting opinions, and there is no way to determine whose feedback is right. Also, raters often suffer from "survey fatigue," which results from having to participate in too many feedback assessments. These concerns raise the question of the reliability and accuracy of 360-degree feedback. Feedback that is not accurate will not be of any use to its recipient.

The final question asked about 360-degree-feedback systems is whether or not they improve performance. The author asserts that performance improvement can be less than satisfactory with any type of feedback. Often intentions to change are high but employees lose their commitment. Vinson offers several suggestions to facilitate the use of 360-degree feedback to produce change: (1) The feedback must be confidential and anonymous. (2) One must consider the length of time an employee has been in the position. (3) A feedback expert should interpret the feedback. (4) Follow-up and the development of specific action plans are essential. (5) Feedback should not be used to determine salary or promotions. (6) Feedback should include written descriptions as well as numerical ratings. (7) One must ensure that instruments are statistically valid and reliable. (8) Feedback should not be utilized with too many employees at one time.

Stephen J. Wall. Feedback on feedback. *Training and Development* 49:1, January 1995, pp. 2-4.

Wall, of Manus Associates in New York City, discusses two conclusions that he and George Yukl of the State University of New York in Albany have arrived at from working together extensively on the development and implementation of 360-degree-feedback systems.

The author first discusses the work of David Bracken (1994; see annotation on page 5) about the design and use of 360-degree-feedback assessments. Bracken offers prescriptions for making sure that 360-degree feedback

is experienced as a powerful tool for individual and organizational development. Wall agrees with Bracken that 360-degree feedback is essential to the development process for employees. His experience, however, has led him to make the following observations.

The first involves the use of response scales. Wall suggests that response scales based on frequency are preferable to response scales based on degrees of satisfaction or agreement. He asserts that frequency-based responses measure observable and specific behaviors and minimize subjectivity. Second, Wall compares two response-scale formats (how many possible choices are available to a rater using the scale). He believes that a six-point response scale adds no appreciable value over a four-point scale. In addition, a six-point scale may tend to confuse and burden respondents. One recommendation is to use a four-point scale (that is, give the respondent four choices) but supplement it with the constant option of "Don't Know" or "Not Applicable." Wall states that 360-degree feedback is an excellent way to support various initiatives, but it is only powerful to the extent that it is reliable and accurate. To guarantee accuracy, questions must be clear, understandable, and based on observable interactions.

Peter Ward. A 360-degree turn for the better. *People Management* 1:3, February 9, 1995, pp. 20-22.

This article presents various methods and considerations involved with 360-degree feedback that will help ensure maximum benefits from the process. The author asserts that 360-degree feedback, by collecting a broad picture of an individual's performance or skills, provides valuable information needed for the changing roles of managers. He presents three fundamental questions about feedback: (1) Why have feedback at all? (2) Who can be assessed by 360-degree feedback? (3) Should feedback assessments try to describe behavior or judge behavior? Ward addresses various issues related to these questions, along with their implications.

He then discusses various issues that concern implementing 360-degree feedback. Descriptions are provided regarding the perspectives of various rater groups: bosses, direct reports, peers/co-workers, customers, and self. Ward's concern about implementation is that, in order to achieve the maximum developmental impact, 360-degree methods must be properly applied.

There are five pitfalls that should be avoided: (1) 360-degree assessments should not focus only on the person's weaknesses or needs. (2) Feed-

back should be collected with an emphasis on proper implementation and on follow-up action. (3) Confidentiality is necessary for honest ratings. (4) The purpose of the feedback should be communicated to all employees involved. (5) The feedback and its use for developmental action-planning should be supported within the organization. The final step, after collecting and using 360-degree feedback, should be an evaluation of the organization's training and development needs.

Francis J. Yammarino and Leanne E. Atwater. Self-perception accuracy: Implications for human resource management. *Human Resource Management* 32:2&3, Summer 1993, pp. 231-245.

The authors argue that, according to previous research, self-ratings are generally problematic. Self-ratings tend to be inaccurate when compared to more "objective" raters—in this case, subordinates, peers, supervisors, and customers or clients. Although research is fairly limited on this subject, the authors use available studies to develop a model for self-perception accuracy. They then discuss the implications of self-rating accuracy for human resources professionals.

Self-perception is measured (via self-ratings) on a particular dimension of interest. Others' perceptions are measured on the same dimension of interest (leadership abilities, for example). Self-other agreement is determined by comparing the two perceptions. The degree to which they agree or disagree determines self-rating accuracy. The model shows that this comparison process results in three categories of individuals: accurate estimators (high degree of self-other agreement), over-estimators (inflated self-ratings compared to others), and under-estimators (deflated self-ratings compared to others). The implications for human resources professionals are that over-estimators proceed to have diminished organizational or personal outcomes from the feedback, accurate estimators have enhanced organizational/individual outcomes, and under-estimators have mixed outcomes.

The authors then discuss the elements of their model of self-perception accuracy. First, they look at the determinants of self-ratings and other-ratings and the process that determines the two stages of perception: initial perception and reviewed perception. Next, they discuss the process through which the self-other agreement is measured by categorizing the degrees of agreement. Finally, implications of self-other agreement are discussed. The authors

address the need for further research, stating that it is necessary to better understand self-perception accuracy and its implications.

Gary Yukl and Richard Lepsinger. How to get the most out of 360-degree feedback. *Training* 32:12, December 1995, pp. 45-50.

Yukl and Lepsinger give specific suggestions for implementing 360-degree feedback and discuss factors that affect its impact on development. They assert that 360-degree feedback can prompt measurable changes in managerial behavior. This behavioral impact is the result of providing managers with honest and specific feedback about how their behavior affects others. This impact can be diminished, however, if certain issues are not examined. There are two categories of pitfalls: (1) design and administration of the assessment, and (2) design and facilitation of the follow-up activities.

In designing a questionnaire or selecting one from an external source, certain qualities are desirable. First, it should be well researched to assure that the items and scales can be linked directly to managerial effectiveness. Second, the items should measure specific and observable behaviors. Third, the behaviors should be described in positive terms, and each item should be worded so that it pertains directly to the ratee. Fourth and last, the questionnaire should specify the relationship between the rater and the ratee. Separate questionnaires should be considered for each group: self, supervisors, peers, subordinates, and customers.

There are a number of suggestions for administration of the assessment. Respondents should be chosen who are important to the manager's effectiveness and are influenced by it. The number of respondents should be large enough to form a comprehensive sample and ensure confidentiality of ratings. Training should familiarize raters with the purpose of the feedback, ensure confidentiality, and advise raters to avoid bias. For example, "halo error" occurs when a well-liked manager receives high ratings on all scales, regardless of his or her actual level of performance.

The feedback report should present the data from each rater group separately. Self-ratings should be compared to both others' ratings and to norms, or a managerial effectiveness model. Feedback should also be displayed by item as well as by scale. The overall purpose of the feedback is for use to develop an action plan. One way to facilitate follow-up is to have a feedback workshop involving a group of managers and a facilitator. In this workshop, managers interpret data and develop specific goals and plans.

Follow-up on plans can include skills-training, support and coaching, and assessments of impact and effectiveness of the assessment process itself. The impact of 360-degree feedback requires further research, but experience has demonstrated the potential benefits of using 360-degree feedback for development.

Frequently Asked Questions about 360-degree Feedback

Users of 360-degree feedback, such as program participants, researchers, human resources professionals, and others, often ask about its background, the theories associated with it, and its practical uses. What follows are some of their commonly asked questions with responses that are generally based on the information contained in the annotations.

How and When Did 360-degree Feedback Develop?

The ideas behind 360-degree feedback are not new. Assessment centers developed by the German military during World War II recognized the value of gaining performance insights from multiple perspectives. In organizations, early methods of 360-degree feedback were by surveys used to gather employee opinions. The fundamental premise was that information gathered from multiple perspectives was thought to be more comprehensive and objective than the information obtained from only one source. Over the decades, these opinion surveys were used to gather information about various aspects of the organization, including compensation, benefits, leadership, and so forth. But the use of 360-degree instruments for individual assessment was rare prior to the 1980s. Because of the traditional hierarchical structure of most organizations during that time, performance appraisals typically were top-down, single-source assessments.

But things have changed. Information regarding an employee's performance is now sought for more than just the annual performance evaluation for some of the following reasons (Hirsch, 1994; Holt, Noe, & Cavanaugh, 1996; Jones & Bearley, 1996). Because of changes in the business environment, employees who once felt satisfied and secure in their jobs now find themselves responsible for their own careers (Nowack, 1993; O'Reilly, 1994; Romano, 1993). Also, empowerment has made leadership a necessary competency for all levels of employees (Crystal, 1994) and downsizing has made it important for even skilled managers to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses to remain competitive (Hirsch, 1994; Hoffman, 1995). In addition, teams and partnering initiatives have made communication and managerial effectiveness vital to individual and organizational success (Melymuka, 1994; Peters, 1996).

Partly because of these trends, a new concept was born: the utilization of organizational resources for *individual development* (Jones & Bearley, 1996; Peters, 1996). People desiring to become leaders began to study and to develop ways of becoming better employees. Individuals began to seek new

sources of information that would allow them to see both their strengths and their shortcomings—strengths and developmental needs that might not be exposed in traditional performance evaluations (Budman & Rice, 1994; Dunnette, 1993; Hirsch, 1994). Managers realized that the first step in development is discovering what specifically needs to be developed. They understood that in order to gain more useful knowledge of themselves, they needed better tools to gather this information. The tools being used for these purposes are more and more often 360-degree-feedback assessments (Hirsch, 1994; Jones & Bearley, 1996; Lublin, 1994; McGarvey & Smith, 1993). With the success of this technique for developmental purposes, the idea emerged that 360-degree feedback could also be useful for performance appraisal and decision-making purposes (Edwards & Ewen, 1996).

What Are the Benefits of 360-degree Feedback?

It is becoming widely recognized that 360-degree feedback offers several advantages over single-source assessment (Budman & Rice, 1994; Dunnette, 1993; Hoffman, 1995; Jones & Bearley, 1996; Kaplan & Palus, 1994; Lublin, 1994; McGarvey & Smith, 1993; Nicholas, 1992; Nowack, 1993; Vinson, 1996). Its benefits can be grouped into four categories:

(1) 360-degree assessments offer new perspectives by which an individual's skills, behaviors, abilities, or performance can be judged (Denton, 1994; McCauley & Moxley, 1996; McGarvey & Smith, 1993; Milliman, Zawacki, Norman, Powell, & Kirksey, 1994; Mohrman, Resnick-West, & Lawler, 1990; Nicholas, 1992).

Often, particular aspects of an individual's performance or behavior are not observable by or do not affect all employees, depending on their relationships with the individual being evaluated. Because 360-degree assessments obtain input from new and varied perspectives, the feedback creates a more complete picture of an individual's performance and skills. Managers are able to see how their behavior affects those around them and how others perceive their ability.

(2) 360-degree assessments alleviate some recognized deficiencies of top-down, single-source assessments (Bracken, 1994; Budman & Rice, 1994; Harvey, 1994; Hirsch, 1994; Jones & Bearley, 1996; Marchese & McGowan, 1995; Nicholas, 1992; Vinson, 1996; Ward, 1995).

Single-source assessments are subject to the biases and subjectivity of a single individual. Reliance on a single source (for example, the supervisor) for retrospective evaluations, which often cover a year of performance information, may not provide fair and valid feedback.

There are, however, some rating biases that may affect the validity of all performance ratings, including those collected with 360-degree-feedback instruments. One such error is known as "halo error," where an individual is rated as good or poor based on his or her reputation rather than on the actual level of performance (Yukl & Lepsinger, 1995). Another source of error, "recency effects," results from raters giving too much weight to performance that occurred a few months before the assessment. For example, an employee with poor performance over most of the year is still rated highly because of a project successfully completed a few weeks before the appraisal. Recency effects often occur in organizations that do not emphasize or prioritize performance or developmental assessments (McGarvey & Smith, 1993).

Although it is true that all raters may be affected by these biases, the use of more than one perspective permits the ratings to be averaged across a number of respondents, which may provide a truer evaluation of the focal manager's performance (Denton, 1994).

(3) 360-degree assessments provide the unique opportunity for individuals to rate themselves (Dunnette, 1993; Hazucha, Hezlett, & Schneider, 1993; London & Beatty, 1993; McCauley & Moxley, 1996; Nilson & Campbell, 1993; Smither, London, Vasilopoulos, Reilly, Millsap, & Salvemini, 1995; Tornow, 1993; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1991; Ward, 1995; Yammarino & Atwater, 1993).

Self-evaluations have been used for purposes other than 360-degree feedback; however, these evaluations traditionally focused on job satisfaction or organizational effectiveness, rather than on individual performance. With 360-degree feedback, self-evaluation adds yet another perspective from which performance and behaviors can be observed. The act of evaluating one's own effectiveness can enhance the assessment process itself. For example, self-ratings can more fully involve the focal individual in the rating process (Crystal, 1994). This involvement can positively affect both the implementation and administration of the process, as well as the impact of the feedback. Employees tend to place more trust in a process in which they themselves are a factor (Edwards, 1995), which can lead to better acceptance of the feedback (Budman & Rice, 1994; Vinson, 1996).

In addition to generating "buy-in," self-ratings offer unique insight into how self-perception affects managerial performance. In many 360-degree-feedback instruments, self-ratings are compared to ratings from other groups. Some assessment systems compare self-ratings to normative data (Jones & Bearley, 1996). There have been a few studies, and more are emerging, on the comparison of self- and others' ratings. For the purposes of this review, those

studies are not presented in depth. There are, however, some practical implications that relate to the degree of agreement between self- and others' ratings. The primary finding is that discrepancies between self- and others' ratings can provide important insights about managerial and leadership effectiveness (Nilsen & Campbell, 1993). Although there is little research on the causes of these differences, many users of 360-degree assessments feel that understanding the differences between one's self-view and the views of others is an essential step in leadership development (Dalton, 1996; McCauley & Moxley, 1996). Adding self-awareness to the assessment, therefore, can lead to greater impact of the feedback. This type of impact can only be obtained when the assessment provides feedback from all perspectives relevant to a manager's effectiveness, including self-ratings.

(4) 360-degree assessments can be used to reinforce organizational values and vision (Crystal, 1994; Heisler, 1996; London & Smither, 1995; O'Reilly, 1994; Parker-Gore, 1996; Shaver, 1995; Sweet, 1995).

According to Parker-Gore (1996), organizational cultures must be reinforced and developed. In this capacity, 360-degree feedback can reiterate the value of specific abilities, behaviors, or actions to overall organizational values (Heisler, 1996). For example, a manager who must be innovative in order to be successful can receive specific feedback on his or her ability to be creative and open to new ideas. When 360-degree assessments are aligned with organizational visions and values, individual feedback may be more valid for use in that organization. Gebelein (1996) argues that the full impact of 360-degree feedback will not be realized if it only supports individual change and does not integrate that change into the organizational strategy.

How Should 360-degree Feedback Be Used?

Feedback received from 360-degree assessments can be used for almost any initiative that requires extensive information about an employee's effectiveness (Crystal, 1994; Wall, 1995). These initiatives fall into two general categories: feedback for development and feedback for performance appraisal.

Ratings are gathered similarly for both uses of 360-degree feedback. The key difference is who owns the data that are collected (Dalton, 1996). When 360-degree feedback is used exclusively for development, the feedback is available only to the focal individual (and sometimes to the facilitator who provides the feedback). However, if the feedback is used for performance appraisal, the data must be available to the person conducting the appraisal, typically the employee's supervisor. Deciding how the 360-degree feedback

is to be used raises some important issues that can affect the whole process (Melymuka, 1994).

Feedback for development only. Many feel that 360-degree feedback should not be used for appraisal purposes (for example, Crystal, 1994; Dalton, 1996; Edwards, 1995). The main contention is that using 360-degree feedback for performance appraisal affects how the raters evaluate the focal individual (Antonioni, 1996; Marchese & McGowan, 1995). Research has shown that raters are affected by the knowledge that their ratings can influence another's career (Lublin, 1994). Additionally, knowing that one's boss will see the assessment results can affect how an employee rates him- or herself. A commonly reported effect of using feedback for appraisal is that both self-ratings and the ratings of co-workers tend to be inflated when collected for decision-making purposes (Antonioni, 1996).

Another issue involves the content of the items that are rated in developmental assessments versus performance appraisals. Assessments that are used for development only tend to concentrate on skills or behaviors and often involve predictive evaluations. Performance appraisals differ in that they measure past performance and are specific to the employee's particular job. Because performance appraisals are retrospective, they can be more easily affected by bias and may not provide the information an individual needs to improve performance (Jones & Bearley, 1996).

Feedback for performance appraisal. Even when feedback is gathered from multiple sources for performance appraisal, the final decision about pay or promotion is typically made by a single person or management committee. It is the responsibility of the decision-makers to interpret the results of a 360-degree assessment and to use the data to make appropriate decisions. Although some feel that using 360-degree assessment in performance appraisal makes the evaluation more fair for the employee (Bernardin, Dahmus, & Redmon, 1993), these evaluations are subject to bias and, as with any human process, there will be errors in judgment. A possible advantage of using 360-degree feedback for appraisal purposes is that multiple sources of feedback may cancel out those biases and provide a more well-rounded picture of the employee's past performance (McGarvey & Smith, 1993). Some also feel that using 360-degree assessment for appraisal will promote the acceptance of decisions because the information on which the decisions are based is more complete.

Feedback for development *and* appraisal. Some organizations are now attempting to incorporate 360-degree feedback into their appraisal and developmental processes (Dunnette, 1993; London & Beatty, 1993). This

trend is evolving as companies attempt to maximize the potential of this method. The literature suggests, however, that 360-degree assessments first be used for only one purpose in order to acclimate employees to the system (Jones & Bearley, 1996). These assessments can then slowly be administered for other organizational purposes. This will ensure that the feedback will be accepted and effective for both developmental and decision-making purposes (Romano, 1993). It also may be necessary to develop separate assessments for each purpose, because feedback gathered for development is not necessarily applicable to pay or promotion decisions (Harvey, 1994; Yukl & Lepsinger, 1995). If 360-degree feedback is to be used in more than one way, it should be collected and interpreted according to its intended use.

How Do You Integrate 360-degree Feedback into Organizational Development Systems?

Whatever the use of the 360-degree feedback, there are three main stages to the implementation process: preparation, administration, and follow-up. There are many points to consider at each stage that can affect the success of the process. Again, the literature provides various recommendations relating to each issue.

Prepare the organization and employees. Preparation is the first step in the process of implementing 360-degree feedback (Bracken, 1994; Coates, 1996; Shaver, 1995). This is necessary regardless of the purpose of the feedback (Carey, 1995; Hirsch, 1994). For example, an organization may lack effective leaders and wish to develop managerial skills and improve managerial behavior. Or, some organizations may be dissatisfied with their current appraisal process and decide they need a process that is more fair.

After determining what organizational needs can be met by using 360-degree feedback, the logistics of implementing the process must be considered. One of the first decisions is what type of instrument to use. There are three types of 360-degree instruments, each with positive and negative aspects—the literature suggests that instrument design can affect the results of the assessment (Guinn, 1996; Marchese & McGowan, 1995). First, there are "off the shelf" feedback instruments that measure generic skills or competencies. Second, there are instruments that are developed by an outside group (such as a consulting firm) that focus on specific organizations and their assessment needs (that is, custom-designed). Third, there are 360-degree-assessment systems that are developed internally and relate to specific positions or teams within the organization (Melymuka, 1994).

In choosing which of these to use, cost becomes a primary factor (Hirsch, 1994; Nowack, 1993; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1991). Off-the-shelf instruments are generally the least expensive, followed by customized instruments. Internally developed assessment systems generally involve more indirect costs, such as the time and expertise required for development and design. Reliability and validity are important factors to consider in choosing which assessment instrument to use (Van Velsor, Leslie, & Fleenor, 1997). These qualities usually vary according to the expertise and experience of the instrument developer.

Preparing individual participants for a 360-degree process involves educating them about the assessment and the feedback (Shaver, 1995). First, employees should be informed of how their feedback will be used (Ward, 1995). Then, participants in the feedback assessment should be trained to avoid common rating errors. Training can also reinforce the role of the feedback in reinforcing company values and strategy (Gebelein, 1996). Participants should also be informed as to whether they will be held accountable for their ratings. This issue of rater confidentiality is key to preparing participants, and the literature presents a variety of opinions on the subject (Crystal, 1994; Dalton, 1996; Holt et al., 1996; McCauley & Moxley, 1996; McGarvey & Smith, 1993; Milliman et al., 1994; Nowack, 1993; Shaver, 1995; Sweet, 1995; Yukl & Lepsinger, 1995).

Training generally should be extended not only to the raters but also to the person being rated (Budman & Rice, 1994). If the feedback is being used for development, the employee being rated should be prepared to receive and to act on the feedback. If it is used for performance appraisal, the ratee should be aware of how the assessment results will affect decisions such as promotion and compensation. In both cases, feedback obtained from multiple sources can often be surprising and difficult to deal with for the recipient (Ludeman, 1995). This is especially true when an employee learns that self-perceived strengths are seen as developmental needs by others. Preparing managers to receive feedback from their subordinates is a complex issue—one that is unique to upward feedback.

Administer the assessment. After deciding what 360-degree instrument to use, how to use its feedback, and preparing the participants for the process, the assessment instrument can be administered (Bracken, 1994). According to Shaver (1995), design and administration of the assessment can affect the outcome of the process. Most 360-degree feedback instruments are questionnaires that use scaled items to assess employees (Shaver, 1995; Yukl & Lepsinger, 1995), but some include sections for open-ended responses. It is

necessary to consider the medium for the data collection in advance. An important factor to consider is who will be evaluated (Hirsch, 1994; Sweet, 1995; Ward, 1995). Feedback for development has been gathered both for fast-track, high-performing employees and for employees who lack the necessary skills to be effective (Hirsch, 1994; Jones & Bearley, 1996). However, 360-degree systems are now being used throughout organizations for every level of employee. Once the employees to be assessed are decided upon, it is necessary to determine who will provide the ratings (Mohrman et al., 1990).

Typically, to be effective, the raters should be in positions within the employee's circle of influence and should be able to observe the employee's behavior and performance. Sources to consider include peers, subordinates, direct reports, and supervisors, as well as internal and external customers. Another decision to make is how many raters to include for each ratee (Hirsch, 1994; Milliman et al., 1994). Issues that affect the number of raters to use include confidentiality and rating bias. Also, in the feedback, the ratings from each source should be presented individually, rather than combined into a single "others" rating (London & Smither, 1995).

The next step in implementing the 360-degree assessment involves providing feedback to the focal individual. Interpreting the feedback is another aspect that is treated in various ways (London & Beatty, 1993; McGarvey & Smith, 1993; Moses, Hollenbeck, & Sorcher, 1993; Sweet, 1995; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1991; Vinson, 1996; Yukl & Lepsinger, 1995). Some instruments are accompanied by instructions and guidelines for interpreting the data. Other instruments use an outside consultant or facilitator to interpret the feedback for the employee. Whatever process is used, the goal of 360-degree feedback is to provide usable and relevant information, either for employee development or for appraisal by the organization. The feedback should be presented in a way that exposes weaknesses or shortcomings in performance or behavior, and should identify strengths as well. The comparison of self-ratings to the ratings of others can also be an important aspect of 360-degree feedback (Jones & Bearley, 1996; McCauley & Moxley, 1996; Nowack, 1993; Yammarino & Atwater, 1993).

Conduct the follow-up. Once the feedback is interpreted, the question arises: What next? The follow-up, or how the feedback is used by the ratee, is an important part of the 360-degree process (Shaver, 1995; Sweet, 1995). This is especially true if the feedback is to be used for developmental purposes. In these cases, receiving feedback from multiple sources is only the first step in a larger development process (Dalton, 1996; McCauley &

Moxley, 1996; Ward, 1995). Vinson (1996) indicates that once strengths and developmental needs are identified, the employee must decide how to use the information to facilitate improvement. In general, this stage involves creating some sort of development plan by using the feedback to set specific goals (Yukl & Lepsinger, 1995). The employee then must work to achieve those goals using this plan (Peters, 1996).

Using feedback from multiple sources is vital to the effectiveness of development plans for two reasons. First, it provides potentially accurate and diverse information on where employees stand in relation to where they should be in terms of skills and behaviors. Second, 360-degree feedback may increase self-awareness and provide insight into how employees' behavior and performance affects those around them. Both of these aspects are thought to be important contributions of 360-degree feedback.

To use multi-rater feedback for development, certain factors should be considered relating to both the organization and the individual. On the organizational level, development should be encouraged and supported (Denton, 1994). After an individual's developmental needs are identified, it is necessary for the organization to play an active role in the development process (Bracken, 1994). Organizational support can take various forms, from a simple show of support to extensive and specific training (Yukl & Lepsinger, 1995). Organizational support for individual development may require a shift in the culture of the organization, and it may take time for development based on 360-degree feedback to reach its maximum potential.

Using 360-degree feedback for performance appraisal also involves follow-up. If the feedback is linked to pay and promotion decisions, then an appeal process may be necessary (Mohrman et al., 1990). There should be an opportunity for the employee involved to react to the feedback and the associated decisions. This is especially true in the early stages of implementing a 360-degree system for performance appraisal. Because performance appraisal focuses on past performance and behavior, it should be followed by plans or suggestions to improve future performance (Hirsch, 1994). Essentially, performance appraisals evaluate what an employee has done, whereas feedback for development addresses how the employee gets things done (London & Beatty, 1993).

What Are Future Trends and Research Needs for 360-degree Feedback?

One trend in 360-degree feedback is the growing popularity of electronic methods, such as personal computers (PCs), for administration and feedback reporting. Software programs for administering instruments and

producing feedback reports can be licensed or purchased from several vendors of 360-degree-feedback products. Instruments that are sold for use with PCs usually have scoring programs built into the software. Although computer PC administration may increase the price for the consumer, the method has many benefits, especially in the presentation of the feedback to the recipient. Instead of sifting through mounds of data to find, for example, the highest rated items, a manager can get the software program to sort and arrange the information in a fraction of the time (Van Velsor et al., 1997).

Instrument customization is another trend related to the electronic administration of 360-degree feedback. Advances in technology allow vendors to use what is called an *open architecture* approach in developing instruments. This approach permits clients to request that specific items and scales, which are relevant to their organizations, be added to an instrument. These items are usually selected from a collection of items in the vendor's database known as an *item bank*. Although this trend began in order to meet customer demand, there is currently some disagreement among experts as to the degree to which this practice affects the validity of the instrument (Van Velsor et al., 1997).

A future trend to watch for is the administration of 360-degree feedback over the Internet. Several vendors are developing 360-degree-feedback processes that will be delivered over the World Wide Web (WWW). The method shows some promise because it eliminates the need for passing out and collecting paper forms or diskettes containing an instrument. A downside to this trend is that all employees do not yet have access to PCs or to the Internet.

Many of the publications annotated here call for further research on the 360-degree-feedback process. Not only is more research needed related to business initiatives and impact, there is a need for additional research on the psychological implications of giving and receiving 360-degree feedback (London & Beatty, 1993; Yammarino & Atwater, 1993). This research should be targeted toward issues such as rater psychology, self-awareness, and feedback receptivity; it should also focus on the overall impact and design of 360-degree feedback, including the possible effects of electronic administration and customization of 360-degree-feedback instruments.

Every indication is that the use of 360-degree feedback will continue to grow (Bracken, 1994; Budman & Rice, 1994; Hirsch, 1994; Hoffman, 1995; McGarvey & Smith, 1993; Romano, 1993). Further experience with this technique will lead to new ideas and methods but also may identify pitfalls to avoid. There is still little agreement in the literature on the several issues

surrounding 360-degree feedback. This lack of consensus, however, has not seemed to slow its growing popularity. To fairly evaluate 360-degree feedback, one must be aware of its benefits but also be cautious of its complexity. Because it can be such a powerful tool, the potential for error and misuse is increased. Adding to such potential drawbacks is the fact that 360-degree feedback is a relatively new method. Although it has been around in various forms for some time, only with its recent surge in popularity has it been closely examined. As 360-degree feedback is used more for performance appraisal, the repercussions of errors in the process become greater (Jones & Bearley, 1996).

Appendix A: Related Sources

These sources, located in the literature search, are relevant to 360-degree feedback but did not meet the criteria for including works in this report. However, many of them address technical details relating to 360-degree feedback and assessment in general and are included here as supplementary information.

Dennis J. Adsit, Steven Crom, Dana Jones, and Manuel London. Management performance from different perspectives: Do supervisors and subordinates agree? *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 9:2, 1994, pp. 22-29.

Richard D. Arvey, David A. Cole, Joy F. Hazucha, and Frans M. Hartanto. Statistical power of training evaluation designs. *Personnel Psychology* 38, 1985, pp. 493-508.

Susan Ashford. The feedback environment: An exploratory study of cue use. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 14, 1993, pp. 201-224.

Leanne Atwater, Paul Roush, and Allison Fischthal. The influence of upward feedback on self and follower ratings of leadership. *Personnel Psychology* 48, 1995, pp. 35-59.

Leanne Atwater and Francis Yammarino. Does self-other agreement on leadership perceptions moderate the validity of leadership and performance predictions? *Personnel Psychology* 45, 1992, pp. 141-164.

Enrico Auteri. Upward feedback leads to culture change. *HR Magazine* 39:6, June 1994, pp. 78-84.

Timothy T. Baldwin and J. Kevin Ford. Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. *Personnel Psychology* 41, 1988, pp. 63-105.

Julie H. Barclay and Lynn K. Harland. Peer performance appraisals. *Group and Organizational Management* 20:1, 1995, pp. 39-60.

Galen L. Baril, Roya Ayman, and David J. Palmiter. Measuring leader behavior: Moderators of discrepant self and subordinate descriptions. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 24:1, 1994, pp. 82-94.

Thomas E. Becker and Richard Klimoski. A field study of the relationship between the organizational feedback environment and performance. *Personnel Psychology* 42, 1989, pp. 343-358.

H. John Bernardin and Richard W. Beatty. Can subordinate appraisals enhance managerial productivity? *Sloan Management Review* 28:4, 1987, pp. 63-73.

Walter C. Borman, Leonard A. White, and David W. Dorsey. Effects of ratee task performance and interpersonal factors on supervisor and peer performance ratings. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 80:1, 1995, pp. 168-177.

Mary L. Broad and John W. Newstrom. *Transfer of Training*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992.

Stéphane Brutus, John Fleenor, and Manuel London. Does 360-degree feedback work in different industries? A between-industry comparison of the reliability and validity of multi-source ratings. *Journal of Management Development*, in press.

Stéphane Brutus, John Fleenor, and Cynthia McCauley. *Self-other rating discrepancy in 360-degree feedback: An investigation of demographic and personality predictors*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, San Diego, CA, April 1996.

Stéphane Brutus, John Fleenor, and Sylvester Taylor. *Impact of different congruence methodologies on 360-degree feedback research*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, San Diego, CA, April 1996.

Aubry Daniels. *Performance Management*. Tucker, GA: Performance Management Publications, 1989.

Mary Beth DeGregorio. *An investigation of the influence of self-other feedback congruence on feedback acceptance*. Paper presented at the Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, St. Louis, MO, April 1991.

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Appendix B: Selection Criteria

In searching the literature related to 360-degree feedback and assessment, we noticed the emergence of three trends. First, it appears that more literature has been published on this subject in the past five years than in the five *decades* before that. Second, in each subsequent year, more articles, papers, books, and studies on 360-degree feedback have appeared. Third, the literature on 360-degree feedback can sometimes be difficult to recognize and to locate.

This difficulty is attributable to the following factors. The first obstacle to finding published literature is the lack of a consistent terminology for 360-degree feedback. Many terms are used (multisource, multi-rater, multiple level, 360 degree, and so forth) that are essentially synonymous. Second, usage of these terms only recently became widespread, and most articles published before 1990 or so did not use these labels. Third, many relevant papers and articles are yet to be published, although some of the more relevant unpublished sources are included in this review.

In addition, the search for information on 360-degree feedback involved the prevalence of literature on *related* topics. These topics included: feedback, assessment, appraisal, ratings, surveys, questionnaires, performance, and so on, including combinations of these terms. Searches for these broader and more prevalent terms revealed hundreds of sources. Many of these sources, however, were unrelated to 360-degree feedback and, thus, were eliminated from consideration.

After narrowing it down, the literature on 360-degree feedback fell into three categories. The first category included the literature whose subject was wholly 360-degree feedback or assessment. Again, the term 360-degree is used to include the literature on feedback from multiple sources. The second category of literature dealt primarily with rater issues. These sources discussed issues surrounding the collection of performance ratings. Topics included psychological factors in rating others, the psychometrics of self-other rating discrepancies, and the effects of confidentiality on the ratings. The third category included articles related specifically to one rating source, such as upward or peer feedback, but did not focus on the full 360-degree-feedback process. For example, some articles briefly mentioned that upward feedback was part of 360-degree feedback, but the primary subject matter concerned only upward feedback.

Because the purpose of this report is to provide an introduction and overview of 360-degree feedback and assessment, the first category of litera-

ture is emphasized. There are a few articles in this bibliography that fall into the second category. They are included because of their relevance to the general topic of 360-degree feedback. The primary focus of this report is on organizational practices, such as leadership development and performance management; therefore, articles that deal primarily with psychometric issues were not included.

In sum, literature was chosen for inclusion that was relevant, concise, accessible, and focused on general issues related to 360-degree feedback. The books and articles were selected using four main criteria, the first being relevance. The second criterion was timeliness. This report is intended to be an up-to-date resource on this subject; therefore, any literature published before 1990 is not included. This criterion was fairly simple to apply, because only a few significant references were published before 1990. The third criterion dealt with the applicability to organizations. The articles included in this review contain usable and understandable information. Exclusions were made to increase the accessibility of this information for a general audience. We hope that the information presented here will be useful to an audience with varying levels of knowledge about 360-degree feedback. The final criterion used to select the literature was their diversity and uniqueness in relation to other sources. To produce an objective and fair-minded report, we attempted to select works that span the spectrum of thought on 360-degree feedback.

Glossary of Terms

There are a variety of terms used in the literature for 360-degree feedback: *multisource assessment*, *multi-rater feedback*, *360-degree assessment*, and *full-circle evaluation* are some. Below, we first define 360-degree assessment, no matter what term is used, and then define some technical language found in the annotations:

- *360-degree assessment:* An activity of gathering data about an employee from multiple sources in that person's circle of influence. The raters are usually superiors, peers, and subordinates and sometimes family, friends, and acquaintances. Most 360-degree-feedback processes use a survey or questionnaire to gather information. These surveys usually consist of several items (questions), which are grouped together to form the scales of the instrument. These scales often represent some type of competency, such as decision making, delegation, communication, and so forth.
- *Response scales:* Most 360-degree assessments collect scaled responses to the questionnaire items (for example, a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 meaning "all the time" and 1 meaning "never" with regard to how often something is done). These response scales are also sometimes called rating scales.
- *Raters:* The respondents to the questionnaire who assess the focal (or target) individual (the *ratee*) on behaviors, skills, competencies, accomplishments, styles, abilities, or performance. The results of these ratings are collectively the *feedback* that the person being rated will receive.
- *Competencies:* Skills or abilities that are considered necessary to perform the tasks of a job effectively.

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Using 360-degree Feedback in Organizations

An Annotated Bibliography

The use of multi-rater assessment tools in organizations has increased dramatically in recent years and so has the number of books and articles about their use. This publication provides an introduction to this growing practical literature. In addition to the fifty-six annotations, the report looks at the literature from several perspectives, including "When did 360 develop?" "What are its benefits?" and "What are its future trends?" Also included are a list of some important related publications and author and title indexes.

The Authors

John W. Fleenor is an adjunct researcher at the Center for Creative Leadership and a research scientist at Mediappraise Corp., a provider of 360-degree-feedback services via the Internet. His research focuses on the development, use, and validation of 360-degree-feedback instruments. With a Ph.D. in industrial and organizational psychology from North Carolina State University, he is a co-author of *Choosing 360: A Guide to Evaluating Multi-rater Feedback Instruments for Management Development* (CCL, 1997).

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